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The image shows the front cover of a book. It features a dark, possibly black or dark green, background with a light-colored, possibly gold or silver, decorative border. The border is composed of several rectangular frames. Inside the innermost frame, there is a central floral motif at the top, a horizontal band with the text "LORD HARRY BELLAIR" in the middle, and another floral motif at the bottom. The text is in a serif font, and the floral motifs are stylized and symmetrical. The overall design is elegant and classic.

LORD HARRY BELLAIR



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LORD HARRY BELLAIR.



LORD HARRY BELLAIR.

A Tale of the last Century.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty

1874.

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LORD HARRY BELLAIR.

A Story of the Last Century.

CHAPTER I.

A VILLAGE GREEN.

A VILLAGE green, not far from the busy capital—with tall elms about it, casting broad shadows over a high road, a smooth gravelly footpath neatly banked, and garden walls of brick with stone dressings, capped at intervals with stone urns or balls, or overgrown with ivy ;—here and there with carriage-gates excluding curious eyes, but oftener with swing-gates of less pretension,

admitting to straight or winding walks soon lost in little shrubberies, disclosing glimpses of houses, some rather gloomy, others very cheerful—such was the country Green in question, with a silver gleam of the Thames in the distance.

Moreover, it had its pond

“Where cows might cool, and geese might swim”—

a seat beneath the shade for talking age and whispering lovers, though oftener the resting-place of tramps or nursery-maids. The green turf was much frequented by aspiring young cricketers. Behold yon chemist's boy with basketful of phials and pill-boxes. He sets it carelessly on the grass—out with a ball from his pocket, off with his hat and jacket, with which he extemporizes a wicket—and incontinently begins bowling, utterly regardless of the

aristocratic invalid awaiting his morning draught.

A blue-coated butcher-lad mounted on swift pony, comes scouring along the road, whistling as he digs his heels into his pony's sides—he marks the cricketer, abates the fury of his career, and shouts, “Hallo, Jem! what are you after?”

Jem replies—a parley ensues—eventually the butcher-boy alights, flings his rein over a post, sets his basket with the aristocratic invalid's gravy-beef in it beside the aristocratic invalid's draught and pills—and Lord Harry had better turn his sides and his shoulders and his heavy head, as a door on its hinges, on his feather-bed, like the sluggard in Dr. Watts's divine songs—for he may whistle for his ether and beef-tea while Bob and Jem are cricketing—ay, and whistle in vain.

Mark the inconsideration and selfish indifference to the wants and reasonable expectations of others, of these bad boys as they insanely bawl, "Go it, Jem!" "Play, Bob!" "I bowled farthest." "No, you didn't." "Yes, I did." "No, you didn't." "I'm going away." "Not yet." "Yes, I am." "Have one more." "Only one, then." "That went for nothing." "No, it didn't." "Yes, it did—I'm going away now."

And Bob scampers back to his pony and Jem to his basket, just as a pretty maid-servant is about to bring them the indignant remonstrances of Miss Flambeau, who has watched the whole scene from her window.

Miss Betty Flambeau and her mother, on the borders of ninety, lived in one of the smallest houses on the green, on almost the

scantiest means possible to afford the mere appearance of gentility ; but in their minds, manners, and habits they were true ladies, of a school now perhaps extinct. Their lives were unmarked by event. They had survived most of their natural ties : one only grandson and nephew remained to them—a bachelor and man of business, who statedly paid them visits and statedly paid their annuities. He was their greatest object of interest, but his visits were not frequent, and the news he brought them was of the smallest ; so that in default of greater resources, Miss Betty was driven for recreational purposes chiefly to the affairs of the green.

In earlier days, Mr. Oldworth, when he came down on Saturday evenings, would treat his grandmother and aunt to a drive in a glass-coach, submitting cheerfully to

having all the windows up ; but of late, the good old lady had been unable to partake of even this moderate dissipation, and had become nearly bed-ridden ; only undergoing the fatigue of being dressed and sitting up when Mr. Oldworth or some still rarer visitor descended upon her. Usually she now secluded herself in her pretty bedroom, where, with everything about her of the freshest and whitest purity, she sat up in her four-post bed and placidly listened or dozed while her daughter read her the Psalms and Lessons, or, seated at the window, told her of every event on the green.

To keep this old lady alive and comfortable was the chief object of Miss Flambeau's existence. If ever her temper were ruffled, it could be directly or indirectly traced to some injury or indignity, real or

imagined, offered to her mother. Thus on the present occasion—

“ My dear mother, you will not long be kept waiting for your draught, for Collet’s boy is just coming round the green. I suppose the Beauforts returned overnight, for their man Richard is carrying home their French poodle, shaved to look like a little lion. I cannot admire the fashion of disguising poor animals so, and robbing them of their natural defences. A pet lap-dog is certainly better than a monkey. There ! Miss Laura is running out without any powder on her hair, and kissing the little monster with rapture. I am glad of their return, for they always enliven the green ; only I wish they would not bestow so much of their company on that faded old bachelor. He might be their grandfather, but he isn’t ; and ill-natured people will talk.

They have no one to guide them, poor motherless girls."

"One's own sense should guide one in some things," said Mrs. Flambeau. "And they have a father."

"A silly father is worse than no guide, I think," said Miss Flambeau. "He seems only to care for amusing the passing hour, and they do the same. I wonder what Joseph, with his strong sense of responsibility, would think of it. Your beef-tea? Oh, but you must have your draught first, you know. Why, I declare" (growing excited), "those naughty boys are setting down their baskets to play cricket!" tapping at them uselessly with her thimble.

"Ring for Patty," said Mrs. Flambeau. "Some hungry dog may steal the beef."

Patty was just speeding on her errand when Bob returned to a sense of his duties.

CHAPTER II.

THE PENALTIES OF GREATNESS.

"Alas, his efforts double his distress :
He likes yours little, and his own still less."

COWPER.

TURN we now, from

"The calm desires that asked but little room,"

to

"Every want to luxury allied."

"Mrs. Mullett, my lord wants his beef-tea."

"Then my lord must want it a little longer, Mr. Sorel, for the beef has not come yet. Besides, it is not yet eleven o'clock."

“The insolence of woman!” softly ejaculated Mr. Sorel, as with noiseless steps he left the lower regions and ascended to the reception rooms. Daintily threading his way among objects of exquisite *virtù*, which he had beheld so often as to regard with supreme indifference, he entered a dressing-room that might have satisfied a Sybarite, where, though the morning was warm, a bright fire burned on the hearth. Mr. Sorel scientifically arranged a log or two on the brazen dogs, without soiling his taper white fingers, took up a morning paper and seated himself in a luxurious arm-chair, with a pocket handkerchief spread lightly over his knees to prevent their scorching. He then produced a handsome *bonbonnière*, and having selected a sweetmeat to his taste, proceeded to study the news.

Before he had become very deeply absorbed in

“ The popular debate, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,”

of the upper and lower House of Parliament, the silver tinkle of a small bell in an inner apartment made him reluctantly lay his paper aside, and attend to the requirements of some one within.

“ Sorel.”

“ My lord.”

“ Sorel, are you there ?”

“ Yes, my lord.”

“ My ether, Sorel.”

Sorel, who had already been in quest of it, resolved not to have a second journey, but, returning to the ante-room, rang a bell violently, and spoke in an angry though subdued voice to the servant who answered it. Luckily, Bob had by this time arrived at the

house, so the footman soon reappeared with the draught, the faint odour of which quickly pervaded the room. A sickly old man sat up in bed to swallow it, and then sank again on his pillow. Sorel, knowing that his duties were suspended for the present, returned to his newspaper, which he continued to peruse for nearly an hour.

"Now this is abominable," muttered he, as the silver bell again interrupted him in the midst of an interesting paragraph.

Before answering it, he again smartly rang the downstairs bell, and then he presented himself in the darkened room.

"Sorel, it must be past twelve. Why don't I have my beef-tea?"

"My lord, it is not yet twelve, and the beef-tea is ready."

“Serve it, then, and give me more light. Too much, too much ! Temper it—subdue it. That will do—now my tea. You don’t ask me how I am, Sorel. You show no interest in me.”

“How are you, my lord ?”

“Very so-so ; quite unstrung. I thought I must have rung you up in the night—I seemed dying.”

“Oh no, my lord ; it was only weakness.”

“Weakness, sirrah ? But I tell you it was not ! Besides, what is worse than weakness ?”

“I hope your lordship will live many years.”

“But you don’t think so, do you ?”

“Indeed I do, my lord.”

“Well, I hope I may. Give me the glass.”

Sorel placed a looking-glass on the bed.

"I look very ill this morning, I think—dark under the eyes, hey ? "

"That will pass off by and by, my lord. You always look better when you are dressed."

"That's true enough. Well, well, dress me. There's a saying, Sorel, that no man is a hero to his valet-de-chambre."

"Why should he be, my lord ? "

" 'Why should he be,' quotha !—ha, ha ! Enough, enough. Talking exhausts me."

Lord Harry sighed, and allowed himself to be dressed almost like a puppet, in silence. Sorel went through his functions with consummate dexterity ; treating his master almost as if he were a machine, but a machine of the most fragile texture, which any but the slightest touch might

in an instant reduce to nothing, like a soap-bubble.

Lord Harry's face wore meanwhile an air of dejection and suffering which betrayed itself in little winces and gestures. At length he exerted himself to say—"Any news?"

"Hardly any, my lord. The paper is full of tedious debates——"

"Pooh, I did not ask your account of those. I shall read them for myself by and by. Any news on the green?"

"Old Mrs. Gye is dead, my lord."

"Oh, well, she won't be missed much; but you may send my card. Sympathizing inquiries for the family and so forth. But old, Sorel? how old do you make her?"

"Between eighty and ninety, my lord."

“*Between* eighty and ninety? What laxity of expression! Why, there are two whole lustres between them! When *you* are turned eighty, you won’t like people to say you are between eighty and ninety.”

Sorel pursued his avocations a while in silence, and then said: “A marriage is talked of for one of the Miss Beauforts.”

“A marriage?” interrupted Lord Harry, with a start which caused the razor to graze him. “Sorel! you’ve cut me.”

“My lord, I beg your pardon,” said Sorel, losing his temper. “You cut yourself by starting under my hand.”

“Well, Sorel, well—but see, here’s the blood; I’m cut, at any rate. You must stanch the wound, my good fellow.”

“My lord, I beg ten thousand pardons.

I can't think how I could be so unfortunate; but you see, you agitated yourself. Agitation is very bad for you, Dr. Shivers says."

"I know it, I know it—may carry me off in a moment, at any time. Gently, gently, Sorel."

"Do I make you smart, my lord?"

"Nothing to speak of, my dear fellow. Am I disfigured?"

"Oh no, my lord, not in the least! And it has brought colour into your cheeks——"

"Ha, ha,—pooh, you silly fellow."

"But it actually *has*, my lord. Only look at yourself in the glass."

"Well, I protest there's a little something—a slight tinge. Shows there's some circulation left, hey?—some vitality?"

"Yes indeed, my lord?"

"I believe you are attached to me, my poor fellow."

"I should be a brute if I were not," said Sorel.

By the time Lord Harry's toilette had received the finishing touch, he really looked a wonderful deal better. He was fully aware of the fact, as he scrutinized himself in the glass; and the conviction made him look better still.

"I believe this is going to be one of my good days," said he. "In not too strong a light, and with the wind not in the east.

. . . . But what was that idle nonsense you were telling me?"

"About Miss Laura's marriage, my lord?"

"Miss Laura? Oho! I had fancied you said Miss Beaufort."

"One of the Miss Beauforts. I dare

say it's only idle talk. I was going to say so, when your lordship got that unfortunate cut."

"Ah, ah, just as I supposed, mere idle talk—a trumped up story. Take my advice, Sorel—for advice, read *orders*—and don't spread it. Mind what I say; don't let it spread. Beautiful girls get these things said of them, but it is to their disadvantage—creates unpleasantness, sometimes scandals. They would be dreadfully hurt at such talk. I would not have them hear it for the world."

"Oh, certainly not, my lord."

"Therefore, mind you, don't let it spread. I insist upon it that nothing of the kind is talked of downstairs."

"My lord, we never do talk."

"Right, right. *Volti sciolti pensieri stretti*. Which means, open faces, silent

tongues. A golden rule, Sorel. Now my handkerchief, my good fellow. Some *extrait de mille fleurs* — not too much ; just a *souçon*. If you give me too much, I shall ‘die of a rose in aromatic pain.’ Now, your arm.”

And leaning heavily on Sorel’s arm, old Lord Harry, “whose general get-up was choice,” like Julius Cæsar’s, tottered into his drawing-room, sank into his chair, and looked round him with satisfaction.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRIVILEGES OF GREATNESS.

"In various talk the instructive hours they passed,
—Who gave the ball or paid the visit last."

Poem.

"CAN I do anything else, my lord?"

"Yes; bring me my Beauty portfolio, and my Architecture portfolio, my magnifying glass, please, and my little bell. Put my footstool a little nearer. A little more light—not too much. That's enough—that's perfection. Now, I release you."

And unaffectedly glad was Sorel to be released.

It was singular what a change for the

better gradually came over the countenance of the old lord as he ceased to think of himself and became immersed in his occupation. For Lord Harry Bellair had no ordinary mind ; he was gifted with fine taste, quick perception, and cultivated intellect ; so that, had he not been sickly and spoilt from childhood, painfully sensitive, easily irritated, and habituated to rest in amusement instead of toiling with any solid purpose of usefulness, he would have been a wiser, better, and happier man. As it was, he led a languid, self-indulgent, bachelor life from youth to old age, despising court favours and public honours with some reason, hearing all that passed in the gay and busy world from those who mixed in it ; sought, petted, and flattered by the numerous circle who delighted in his summer-lightning wit and reported its scintillations

with eagerness, yet who really cared little for him, and sometimes let him think himself neglected. This stung him to the quick, and made him petulant to his valet, his physician, or whoever happened just then to come near him; but his pettishness soon died out, and he presently found consolation and contentment, not in religion—it would have been a very good thing for Lord Harry to have had more—but in art and *virtù*, which, however they might prove broken reeds at last, lulled his sense of pain for the time, and took him completely out of himself.

Thus, in the present instance, when he had got through the wretchedness of waking up, and getting up, and dressing up, and winding up for the day, he had his Beauty portfolio and his Architecture portfolio before him, and knew he was going to

be happy. The very consciousness of it imparted serenity to his countenance and effaced its wrinkles.

“Now for the Sortes,” thought he to himself. “What shall I open upon? Ha, this mezzotint of Sir Joshua’s Sleeping Girl! How well it exemplifies his own axiom that the impression left on our mind, even of things which are familiar to us, is seldom more than their general effect. To express this in painting was all that he proposed to himself—he did not aim at the futile puerilities of the forerunners of Raffaele. This mouth, I recollect, was expressed in the original by a single touch of vermilion. True, indeed, every hand has not such facility—it were perilous in most to attempt it. But undoubtedly, when the general effect only is presented to us by a skilful hand, it expresses the object in a

livelier manner than the minutest details would do."

Here the door suddenly opened, and admitted two blooming young girls, graceful as fawns, who flew towards him with radiant smiles. The effect on Lord Harry was electric.

"Ha! my idols! my goddesses!" exclaimed he, pushing from him the table on its easy-rolling castors, and extending a hand to each; "welcome, welcome home again! Why, how well you are looking! how pretty—how lovely! What charming new dresses these are! so exquisitely fancied! Why did you run away, you wicked wretches, to make me miss you every hour and every moment?"

"I don't believe you missed us at all," said one of them, laughing. "Your pictures, prints, and medals are all that you

really care for. When we came in, you looked as happy as possible, though you did not know we were near."

"Happy? I happy? Ah, my charmer, if you knew how far you were from the fact. Besides, if I *were* conscious of a certain suavity, it was your nearness which occasioned the balmy feeling; I knew not whence it came, and wondered at it; but I know now, and do not wonder now, my Mary!"

Had Lord Harry been twenty-seven instead of seventy, dangerously sweet might these words, these tones, have been to Mary. As it was, she stood smiling, with her large lustrous eyes fixed full on him, and said gaily—

"Yes, I dare say. No one can rival you, Lord Harry, in saying pretty things. And I even give you credit for believing

in them yourself, half-a-quarter—at the moment.”

“How is papa? How has he contrived to spare you?”

“Papa is quite well,” said Laura, to whom the question was addressed, “and is glad to get rid of us for an hour.”

“An hour by Shrewsbury clock! No, by my faithful little timepiece yonder, which Sorel shall presently retard——”

“No, we must go by our own watches,” said Laura, laughing, “for we have an engagement to keep, and if we are behind time papa will remember it against us hereafter.”

“Children, I don’t know how it is with you, but I begin to feel hungry. We must have something to eat. Sorel” (to his man, who answered the summons), “bring us a

gouter of some sort directly—a refection for these young ladies——”

“ Oh, no, indeed, Lord Harry, not for us—we are not hungry.”

“ Pooh, pooh, don’t you see I speak one word for you and two for myself? Refreshments immediately, Sorel. ‘Sugar and spice, and all that’s nice.’ You should speak for yourself, Miss Mary. Laura is hungry, I am sure.”

“ Yes, I really am,” said Laura. “ What’s the good of denying it? Girls may be hungry sometimes, I suppose, like other people.”

“ Not like other people, my divinity. My princesses are in no one respect like other people. If Laura pecks at a strawberry, or Mary trifles with a sweetbread, it is not like any but their own sweet selves.”

"What are you amusing yourself with this morning, my lord?" said Mary.

"I was just dipping into a volume of my Beauty book, when you came in to give me a fairer page to read. I must have a picture of you both some day, my dear girls."

"I hate sitting for pictures, but I love looking at them," said Mary, "and I hope you will show us your portfolio of beauties and descant a little on them."

"With all my heart. What think you of this fair dame?"

"I call her no beauty at all," said Mary.

"No, indeed, frightful," said Laura.

"And yet a royal duke, afterwards a king, married her for her good looks. Oh, come, allow her some little attraction."

"No, indeed, I cannot. Shut her up—put her away."

"You would treat her as unhandsomely as they would have had her husband do. Here's a pretty, pensive head."

"Yes, the expression is good," said Mary, "though the features are not regular. She looks good."

"She was good. Rather ascetic, rather pedantic, but high-minded: clever withal. Maid-of-honour to Charles the Second's queen. Here again."

"No, I don't like that. Who is it?"

"A famous actress, renowned for wit and beauty."

"Ah, I guessed as much. I was sure she was not one of the right sort."

"Not of the right sort?" repeated he, amused. "How severe you women are

upon one another ! Why, Mary, your own face is just as piquante."

"I cannot thank you for the compliment, my lord. It is not one."

"How prettily she frowns and looks displeased !" said he, laughing. "Dearest Mary, you shall be what you like, so that you be not displeased with me. Now, what will my princesses take ?" turning to a side-table spread with such sweets as young people love. And very readily and merrily they partook of them, and very courteously and pleasantly Lord Harry pressed and smiled.

"Papa should be here," said he. "He loves this wine which you will not taste. What is he about ? writing a book ?"

"Oh, no ! he leaves that to you."

"My dear child, I shall write no more books ; they are vanity and vexation.

There is a time for everything—a time for writing, and a time for not writing.”

“But you have not reached that time,” said Mary.

“Have I not?” said he, looking at her somewhat wistfully.

“No,” she replied, “you have arrived at the age when

‘Old experience doth attain
To something of prophetic strain.’”

“*Old* experience? Bah! you have spoilt your compliment.”

“I was not thinking of compliment,” said Mary, “only of fact. Why, how much you have seen of life! what celebrated persons you have known! what delightful anecdotes you can tell! what knowledge you have of history and poetry and art! One could listen to you for ever; how, then,

can one fail to wish you would go on talking and writing for ever ?”

“Mary, don’t—don’t! you will make my old head spin. My ears are not yet deaf to the praise of those I love. Write, quotha! I never, my dear, got beyond trifles light as air, ‘*qui amuse les loisirs d’une modeste solitude.*’ Trifles that a young man loves to print, but that are idle when they get abroad, especially from a septuagenarian.”

“My lord, I have something to ask of you——”

“Before it is asked, it is granted.”

“Don’t allude to the subject of age any more.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed he, with such vivacity as surprised them both. “Agreed, agreed. How could I broach such an ugly theme to the fair and young ?”

"If I had known you were going to give me *carte blanche*," said Mary, "I would have asked for more."

"Ask, and welcome."

"Go with us to the play to-night," put in Laura. "Lady Juliana has sent us tickets."

"The play, my pet? Plays and I have no more to say to one another. I cannot sit one out. I get sick of having none of the talk. Besides, the talk is such rubbish. There is no real wit in it; and if there were, worldlings would not listen to it. They care for nothing so much as to chatter and make chatter."

"You are satirical, my lord."

"Well, and what harm in it, if I deal in generals? When satire deals in personals, it changes its name and is called libel. To avoid being charged

with libel, one must avoid giving names."

"Then one may give nicknames," cried Laura. "One might easily talk of Mrs. Goosecap, Mr. Clothes-peg, and so forth;" and she was volubly running on, incited by the laughter of Lord Harry, when Mary gravely said—

"I don't know that I approve personal ridicule. There is abundant material for wit and drollery, without descending to nicknames."

"Always good and wise," said Lord Harry. "I love to be checked by you when I say an absurd thing."

"Checked? Oh, no, my lord."

In this desultory manner they wiled the hour away, much to the host's amusement, but whether equally to the improvement of his young companions may be doubted or

“*Between* eighty and ninety? What laxity of expression! Why, there are two whole lustres between them! When *you* are turned eighty, you won’t like people to say you are between eighty and ninety.”

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"Ah, ah, just as I supposed, mere idle talk—a trumped up story. Take my advice, Sorel—for advice, read *orders*—and don't spread it. Mind what I say; don't let it spread. Beautiful girls get these things said of them, but it is to their disadvantage—creates unpleasantness, sometimes scandals. They would be dreadfully hurt at such talk. I would not have them hear it for the world."

"Oh, certainly not, my lord."

"Therefore, mind you, don't let it spread. I insist upon it that nothing of the kind is talked of downstairs."

"My lord, we never do talk."

"Right, right. *Volti sciolti pensieri stretti*. Which means, open faces, silent

tongues. A golden rule, Sorel. Now my handkerchief, my good fellow. Some *extrait de mille fleurs* — not too much; just a *soupçon*. If you give me too much, I shall ‘die of a rose in aromatic pain.’ Now, your arm.”

And leaning heavily on Sorel’s arm, old Lord Harry, “whose general get-up was choice,” like Julius Cæsar’s, tottered into his drawing-room, sank into his chair, and looked round him with satisfaction.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRIVILEGES OF GREATNESS.

"In various talk the instructive hours they passed,
—Who gave the ball or paid the visit last."

Poem.

"CAN I do anything else, my lord?"

"Yes; bring me my Beauty portfolio, and my Architecture portfolio, my magnifying glass, please, and my little bell. Put my footstool a little nearer. A little more light—not too much. That's enough—that's perfection. Now, I release you."

And unaffectedly glad was Sorel to be released.

It was singular what a change for the

better gradually came over the countenance of the old lord as he ceased to think of himself and became immersed in his occupation. For Lord Harry Bellair had no ordinary mind ; he was gifted with fine taste, quick perception, and cultivated intellect ; so that, had he not been sickly and spoilt from childhood, painfully sensitive, easily irritated, and habituated to rest in amusement instead of toiling with any solid purpose of usefulness, he would have been a wiser, better, and happier man. As it was, he led a languid, self-indulgent, bachelor life from youth to old age, despising court favours and public honours with some reason, hearing all that passed in the gay and busy world from those who mixed in it ; sought, petted, and flattered by the numerous circle who delighted in his summer-lightning wit and reported its scintillations

with eagerness, yet who really cared little for him, and sometimes let him think himself neglected. This stung him to the quick, and made him petulant to his valet, his physician, or whoever happened just then to come near him; but his pettishness soon died out, and he presently found consolation and contentment, not in religion—it would have been a very good thing for Lord Harry to have had more—but in art and *virtù*, which, however they might prove broken reeds at last, lulled his sense of pain for the time, and took him completely out of himself.

Thus, in the present instance, when he had got through the wretchedness of waking up, and getting up, and dressing up, and winding up for the day, he had his Beauty portfolio and his Architecture portfolio before him, and knew he was going to

be happy. The very consciousness of it imparted serenity to his countenance and effaced its wrinkles.

“Now for the *Sortes*,” thought he to himself. “What shall I open upon? Ha, this mezzotint of Sir Joshua’s *Sleeping Girl*! How well it exemplifies his own axiom that the impression left on our mind, even of things which are familiar to us, is seldom more than their general effect. To express this in painting was all that he proposed to himself—he did not aim at the futile puerilities of the forerunners of *Raffaello*. This mouth, I recollect, was expressed in the original by a single touch of vermilion. True, indeed, every hand has not such facility—it were perilous in most to attempt it. But undoubtedly, when the general effect only is presented to us by a skilful hand, it expresses the object in a

livelier manner than the minutest details would do."

Here the door suddenly opened, and admitted two blooming young girls, graceful as fawns, who flew towards him with radiant smiles. The effect on Lord Harry was electric.

"Ha! my idols! my goddesses!" exclaimed he, pushing from him the table on its easy-rolling castors, and extending a hand to each; "welcome, welcome home again! Why, how well you are looking! how pretty—how lovely! What charming new dresses these are! so exquisitely fancied! Why did you run away, you wicked wretches, to make me miss you every hour and every moment?"

"I don't believe you missed us at all," said one of them, laughing. "Your pictures, prints, and medals are all that you

really care for. When we came in, you looked as happy as possible, though you did not know we were near."

"Happy? I happy? Ah, my charmer, if you knew how far you were from the fact. Besides, if I *were* conscious of a certain suavity, it was your nearness which occasioned the balmy feeling; I knew not whence it came, and wondered at it; but I know now, and do not wonder now, my Mary!"

Had Lord Harry been twenty-seven instead of seventy, dangerously sweet might these words, these tones, have been to Mary. As it was, she stood smiling, with her large lustrous eyes fixed full on him, and said gaily—

"Yes, I dare say. No one can rival you, Lord Harry, in saying pretty things. And I even give you credit for believing

in them yourself, half-a-quarter—at the moment.”

“How is papa? How has he contrived to spare you?”

“Papa is quite well,” said Laura, to whom the question was addressed, “and is glad to get rid of us for an hour.”

“An hour by Shrewsbury clock! No, by my faithful little timepiece yonder, which Sorel shall presently retard——”

“No, we must go by our own watches,” said Laura, laughing, “for we have an engagement to keep, and if we are behind time papa will remember it against us hereafter.”

“Children, I don’t know how it is with you, but I begin to feel hungry. We must have something to eat. Sorel” (to his man, who answered the summons), “bring us a

gouter of some sort directly—a refection for these young ladies——”

“Oh, no, indeed, Lord Harry, not for us—we are not hungry.”

“Pooh, pooh, don’t you see I speak one word for you and two for myself? Refreshments immediately, Sorel. ‘Sugar and spice, and all that’s nice.’ You should speak for yourself, Miss Mary. Laura is hungry, I am sure.”

“Yes, I really am,” said Laura. “What’s the good of denying it? Girls may be hungry sometimes, I suppose, like other people.”

“Not like other people, my divinity. My princesses are in no one respect like other people. If Laura pecks at a strawberry, or Mary trifles with a sweetbread, it is not like any but their own sweet selves.”

“What are you amusing yourself with this morning, my lord?” said Mary.

“I was just dipping into a volume of my Beauty book, when you came in to give me a fairer page to read. I must have a picture of you both some day, my dear girls.”

“I hate sitting for pictures, but I love looking at them,” said Mary, “and I hope you will show us your portfolio of beauties and descant a little on them.”

“With all my heart. What think you of this fair dame?”

“I call her no beauty at all,” said Mary.

“No, indeed, frightful,” said Laura.

“And yet a royal duke, afterwards a king, married her for her good looks. Oh, come, allow her some little attraction.”

"No, indeed, I cannot. Shut her up—put her away."

"You would treat her as unhandsomely as they would have had her husband do. Here's a pretty, pensive head."

"Yes, the expression is good," said Mary, "though the features are not regular. She looks good."

"She was good. Rather ascetic, rather pedantic, but high-minded: clever withal. Maid-of-honour to Charles the Second's queen. Here again."

"No, I don't like that. Who is it?"

"A famous actress, renowned for wit and beauty."

"Ah, I guessed as much. I was sure she was not one of the right sort."

"Not of the right sort?" repeated he, amused. "How severe you women are

upon one another ! Why, Mary, your own face is just as piquante."

"I cannot thank you for the compliment, my lord. It is not one."

"How prettily she frowns and looks displeased !" said he, laughing. "Dearest Mary, you shall be what you like, so that you be not displeased with me. Now, what will my princesses take ?" turning to a side-table spread with such sweets as young people love. And very readily and merrily they partook of them, and very courteously and pleasantly Lord Harry pressed and smiled.

"Papa should be here," said he. "He loves this wine which you will not taste. What is he about ? writing a book ?"

"Oh, no ! he leaves that to you."

"My dear child, I shall write no more books ; they are vanity and vexation.

There is a time for everything—a time for writing, and a time for not writing.”

“But you have not reached that time,” said Mary.

“Have I not?” said he, looking at her somewhat wistfully.

“No,” she replied, “you have arrived at the age when

‘Old experience doth attain
To something of prophetic strain.’”

“*Old* experience? Bah! you have spoilt your compliment.”

“I was not thinking of compliment,” said Mary, “only of fact. Why, how much you have seen of life! what celebrated persons you have known! what delightful anecdotes you can tell! what knowledge you have of history and poetry and art! One could listen to you for ever; how, then,

can one fail to wish you would go on talking and writing for ever?"

"Mary, don't—don't! you will make my old head spin. My ears are not yet deaf to the praise of those I love. Write, quotha! I never, my dear, got beyond trifles light as air, '*qui amuse les loisirs d'une modeste solitude.*' Trifles that a young man loves to print, but that are idle when they get abroad, especially from a septuagenarian."

"My lord, I have something to ask of you——"

"Before it is asked, it is granted."

"Don't allude to the subject of age any more."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed he, with such vivacity as surprised them both. "Agreed, agreed. How could I broach such an ugly theme to the fair and young?"

"If I had known you were going to give me *carte blanche*," said Mary, "I would have asked for more."

"Ask, and welcome."

"Go with us to the play to-night," put in Laura. "Lady Juliana has sent us tickets."

"The play, my pet? Plays and I have no more to say to one another. I cannot sit one out. I get sick of having none of the talk. Besides, the talk is such rubbish. There is no real wit in it; and if there were, worldlings would not listen to it. They care for nothing so much as to chatter and make chatter."

"You are satirical, my lord."

"Well, and what harm in it, if I deal in generals? When satire deals in personals, it changes its name and is called libel. To avoid being charged

with libel, one must avoid giving names."

"Then one may give nicknames," cried Laura. "One might easily talk of Mrs. Goosecap, Mr. Clothes-peg, and so forth;" and she was volubly running on, incited by the laughter of Lord Harry, when Mary gravely said—

"I don't know that I approve personal ridicule. There is abundant material for wit and drollery, without descending to nicknames."

"Always good and wise," said Lord Harry. "I love to be checked by you when I say an absurd thing."

"Checked? Oh, no, my lord."

In this desultory manner they wiled the hour away, much to the host's amusement, but whether equally to the improvement of his young companions may be doubted or

denied. For the slight sample given of their conversation will show that, if free from positive harm, there was very little good in it ; and that almost every sentence of Lord Harry's was infused with more or less of admiration and flattery. He meant no harm by it ; his moral standard was not high, but it certainly was higher than that of most of his acquaintance ; he delighted in these young people for their guilelessness and sprightliness, which as yet were unimpaired by him, though, after all, they were neither such children nor quite as unsophisticated as he thought. They could not be, mixing as they did with elder people whose talk and walk completely appertained to this life, and with no kind, judicious female relative whose experience and influence were maternal. Lord Harry only sought to amuse the passing hour, as

with children ; but children may be spoilt. He would have pooh-poohed the idea of hurting them with his honeyed speeches ; but "too much honey is not good." We read of some fabled lotus-eaters, who became so bewitched with the delicious food, that it made them loathe the daily bread of their own homes. It has always seemed to the present writer that the deadly lotus-fruit typified flattery.

When the sisters went away at the hour's end, in spite of Lord Harry's entreaties that they would stay, they left him heartily sorry to lose them, and inclined to live the hour over again in a somewhat sentimental mood.

From this he was unwillingly roused when a chariot rolled up to his great iron gates, from which alighted two elderly ladies of quality, who had not learnt that

the affectation of youthfulness is never dignified, and who tottered in on their high-heeled shoes with just the little airs that had been accounted pretty in them a great many years ago. In thin, high-pitched voices, they overwhelmed him with solicitous inquiries respecting his health.

He, not over-pleased to have his reverie disturbed by Lady Bell and Lady Kitty, whom he had known half a century ago as fashionable, flimsy girls, was too polite to withhold a courteous reciprocation of civilities; and when this was over, he began, with some interest, to ask what news was stirring.

Thereupon, after beating about the bush a little, and feeling their way, ensued such a stream of ill-natured and injurious tittle-tattle, that Lord Harry was at length nauseated. He knew some of the reports

to be unfounded or glaringly exaggerated, which did not altogether revolt him when persons he disliked were the victims; but favourites came in for their share; and as his avowing his incredulity only increased the vehemence and virulence of the tale-bearers, he at length most unwisely resolved to vex them in return.

When, therefore, they came to a pause, and inquired what news was afloat on the green, he smiled dubiously and gave them to infer that "he could an' if he would" say something that would concern them very nearly, only that his mind was to keep it to himself.

"Come, I'm sure there must be something," said Lady Kitty, looking at him keenly. "People here have goings on, the same as everywhere else."

"Really, I don't know what goings on

you allude to," said Lord Harry, smiling, and regarding his delicately-shaped nails.

"What are those Beaufort girls about, *par exemple?*" put in Lady Bell, jealously, for, many years ago, she had had thoughts of Lord Harry, and believed him to have had thoughts of her.

"The Misses Beaufort? Probably they are dining about this time, for they are going to the theatre this evening with Lady Juliana Dymoke."

"You know all their movements, I suppose?"

"Pretty well, I believe. They are charming unsophisticated girls, and never have any needless concealments."

"Lady Juliana seems quite to have taken them up. Probably that is owing to you."

“On the contrary, she knew them before I did.”

“Which is it to be, Lord Harry?” said Lady Kitty, spitefully.

“I cannot affect to misunderstand you. Either of them may have me if they like. I am the humble servant of both.”

“Of course you say that to blind us.”

“On my honour, no! I should only be too happy with either, could I strike off a score or two of years, or could they be so singular as to stoop to a septuagenarian.”

“Stoop!—to a title?”

“Ay, Lady Kitty, beauty and merit have a rank of their own.”

“Oh, well, then, we may consider it a settled thing,” returned she, in shrill accents, “for of course neither of them would refuse.”

"There is no of course in the case," said he, still smiling and contemplating his nails, "though you may consider what you like."

"That I shall certainly do, and spread the good news," said Lady Kitty, rising. "Let me be the first to wish you joy, my lord."

"Thank you for your good wishes with all my heart," said he.

"Accept mine too," cried Lady Bell. "Come, sister."

As they swept out, he smiled to himself. But we should never provoke envenomed tongues.

CHAPTER IV.

AUNT AND NEPHEW.

"As one who long in populous city pent," etc.

It is a fine bright Saturday afternoon in early May; the lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chestnuts are in flower, rooks are cawing overhead, and the cuckoo is heard in the distance, Young men and boys are cricketing on the green; Punch is squeaking to a group of amused auditors; a red-cloaked fortune-teller is going from house to house. Dr. Bigsby, the rector, vouchsafes a passing smile to sundry members of his flock, as he hastens towards his par-

sonage. Such is the cheerful scene on which old Mrs. Flambeau looks out from one of her narrow drawing-room windows, while her daughter looks out from the other. Both are dressed in their best; they are evidently watching for some one; the little oval-table is spread with a tea-service of fairy dimensions; and a small, rich seed-cake betokens the expected arrival of a guest.

Nor does the guest disappoint them. As soon as the afternoon stage has come in, Mr. Joseph Oldworth is seen crossing the green and making for the house. Now his attention is fixed for a few seconds on the cricketers; now he lifts his three-cornered hat to the distant clergyman; thereby discovering a well-shaped head and nut-brown hair tied behind with a broad black ribbon. Now,

with smiling face and light, springing step, he quickens his pace as he approaches the dwelling whence two pairs of eyes are intently watching him.

When this young kinsman visited his elderly aunt and aged grandmother, it was like a breath of spring air finding its way into a room that had been shut up all the morning, although it was he who lived in the city and they who dwelt among gardens and green hedges and tall old trees. The salutation to each was a kiss, which they would not have missed on any account; and all seemed unfeignedly pleased at the meeting. They soon fell into cheerful small-talk, relating to what had passed since their last meeting. He pronounced the old lady's looks to be wonderful, and challenged her to a drive in the glass-coach on the morrow,

on which she fell back in her tall arm-chair, shaking with soft laughter, and murmuring—

“ Oh no, no, no, no, no !—”

“ But I say, oh yes, yes, yes,” returned he gaily. “ What ! not with all the windows up ? ”

“ Oh no, no, no, no—you rogue ! ”

“ I really believe she is in the right on't,” said Miss Flambeau to him. “ She is quite past anything of that sort now.”

“ Well, you should know best,” said Mr. Oldworth, after regarding her with smiling scrutiny ; “ she really looks wonderfully well. I had no notion I should find her so flourishing.”

Then they transacted certain business matters, chiefly consisting of the transfer of certain guineas to Miss Flambeau and her signing a receipt for them. Also the

funds were discussed ; and Mrs. Flambeau, not being quite able to follow them, presently dropped asleep. Mr. Oldworth gave his aunt a look of intelligence.

“ She is very apt to drop off now,” was her reply to him. “ Will sleep sometimes for hours.”

“ How placid she looks. How peacefully she declines. Like the close of a long, fine summer day.”

After a little pause, they fell into rather a confidential tête-à-tête.

“ Joseph, how time slips on ! ”

“ It does indeed, my dear aunt.”

“ At first, you visited us, a mere boy.”

“ And many a half-crown you gave me.”

“ Pooh, pooh ! — the pleasure was mutual.”

“ Then yours was very great.”

"You will have the last word—the presents come now from t'other side."

"Is it not fair they should? Turn and turn about."

"Well, well—you are goodness itself.—You are now in the prime of life, nephew."

"Well, aunt, I am six-and-twenty."

"It's time you should think of settling."

"Ah, I thought that was coming! I saw it trembling on your lip and twinkling in your eye."

"Well, but is it not so?"

"I never felt it so in my dear father's life," said he. "But certainly, I often thought we should be better—happier for a lady in the house. Once, on his saying something on the subject, and telling me what he had in contemplation, I told him

how exceedingly it would add to my happiness if he would please thus to consult his own."

"How was it, then, that nothing came of it?" said Miss Flambeau with interest.

"That never transpired," replied he. Perhaps the lady undervalued the happiness offered to her. But it may never have been presented to her acceptance."

"That's more likely—nay, I'm convinced 'twas so," said Miss Flambeau.

"But about yourself, nephew."

"Since his death, I have felt a blank, a want, in our great, deserted house, which I never thought gloomy before."

"My poor dear, you *must* feel lonesome. Why, you have—how many bedrooms? Sixteen or seventeen, and two staircases, and ever so many long passages. I should be frightened out of my wits."

"It's not because I am frightened," said he smiling, "that I want a companion."

"No, of course not; but—have you anybody in view?"

"Well, aunt—I have."

"Who?" cried she eagerly.

"No one you know. You scarcely know her name. Have you ever heard me speak of a Mr. Tolhurst, an old city connection of my father's?"

"Tolhurst? yes, I think I have—yes, I certainly have."

"He is a widower, with an only child—a sweet, pretty daughter. Besides his city house of business, he has a pretty box at Chiswick. He has often invited me to dine there; but in my father's time I never went. Lately, however, I accepted his invitation—and saw Miss Tolhurst."

"Pretty, you say she is," rejoined Miss Flambeau rapidly, "and the only child of a widower. Wealthy, of course."

"Not unprovided, at any rate; but if she were, I have enough for both."

"Oh, my dear Joseph! but you have a right to expect——"

"My expectations are not of the kind you are thinking of," replied he. "If I merely wanted to add money to money, my aim would be much lower than it is. She is lovely in mind and in person; cheerful, intelligent, modest; a devoted daughter, an excellent housekeeper."

"Nay then, she must be the very woman for you," said his aunt warmly; "especially if she is, as you say, well provided."

"The question is, whether *I* am the very man for *her*."

“Oh, my dear Joseph! of that, there can be no doubt.”

He laughed; and his laugh woke his grandmother; who looked round her and cried: “What are you talking about?”—which, of course, they did not tell her.

When Miss Flambeau had infused the herb that cheers but not inebriates, she added *quantum suff.* of some specially choice green tea which was the gift of Mr. Oldworth; the consequence of which was, that the old lady of ninety, after her third cup, was wide awake and remarkably lively all the rest of the evening.

After candles were lighted, a game of cards was proposed. They were all very good players, all quite aware of their advantages, and highly appreciated each other's attainments in what was then a

fashionable accomplishment. Oh, the polite things that were said! the modest, and rather insincere disclaimers, the sly hits, the little pleasantries, the cunning devices, the downright stratagems, the fits of laughter, the talking fast and all together! They were as merry as possible till ten o'clock.

At that hour, by general consent, they left off. Silence ensued; the cards disappeared; chairs were pushed back; the neat maid-servant entered and seated herself near the door. Miss Flambeau opened the large family Bible.

After prayers, Mrs. Flambeau was conducted to her room. She was seen no more till the following day at dinner. Mr. Oldworth drew forth a pamphlet and read it till his aunt returned to partake with him of a light supper. Then they wished

each other good night, and she thought of him on her pillow with tender affection.

As for Mr. Oldworth, his room was so much smaller than the great gloomy bedroom he was accustomed to, that he felt as if he had hardly room to turn about in it, and was considerably amused thereby. But oh ! how fresh, sweet, and clean everything was ! how high the bed was piled with feather-beds, and how low the dimity tester and festooned curtains descended on it ! He thought, " My good aunt is like to smother me with kindness."

CHAPTER V.

A CARD PARTY.

“Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades—the emblem of untimely graves.”

HE was roused from his first sleep, about midnight, by the soft sounds of girlish laughter under his window, mingled with the deeper tones of a masculine voice. The Miss Beauforts and their father, the retired captain, were returning home from Lord Harry's. They had been playing cards with him nearly the whole evening, to the satisfaction of all; for the Beauforts, who had luxurious tastes and narrow means, liked exchanging their poor, ready-

furnished house for the well-lighted rooms of Lord Harry; and he was quite thankful to secure their company by any amount of petting. So they chatted, and laughed, and played; and whether he lost or won, very little cared Lord Harry. Suddenly he began to laugh.

"I had such visitors yesterday," said he, "just after you were gone, my princesses. Two spiteful old women, as horrible as the witches in Macbeth."

"What an escape we had!" said Mary, laughing. "Why could not you have taken a hint from Pope?"

"'Shut, shut the door, good John,' fatigued I said,
'Tie up the knocker—say I'm sick, I'm dead.'"

"Because I happened not to have my wits always about me like the lovely Beauforts."

"Tush!" said Mary, pouting.

"What were their names, my lord," cried Laura.

"Hecate and Hecuba."

"Ha, ha, ha!—excellent, 'fore George," cried Captain Beaufort.

"I protest I thought they would tear me to pieces with their eagle talons," said Lord Harry. "'At every word a reputation died.'"

"Horrid!" said Laura. "I can't bear spiteful people."

"No," said the graver Mary. "The best wit is that which plays on things, not persons."

"Where shall such be found?" said Lord Harry. "Not in this state of society. For my part, I own to liking a flavour—just a *soupçon*—of malice, and therefore I enjoyed tormenting my tormentors a little."

"Oh, you did, did you, my lord?" said Mary, laughing. "Pray, how did you torment them?"

"Why, they went on so outrageously, so sillily—I did not care a pin, so long as they attacked people I was unconcerned in—but when they began on *you*, my Mary——"

"My daughter, my lord?" interrupted Captain Beaufort, who thereby might be supposed rebuking Lord Harry by implication for calling his daughter by her Christian name. But no such purpose had the vain, worldly man, who thought allowable in a lord—an old one—what he would have resented as impertinence in a commoner.

"Pray, what could they find to say of me?" asked Mary, in some concern.

"Nothing worse than that they sus-

pected you of allowing an old gooscap like me to pay my addresses to you."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the captain; at whose mirth Lord Harry looked offended. Recovering himself, he said, "An excellent joke, 'fore George!"

"They must indeed have been in want of something to say," rejoined Mary, with displeasure. "People like those are the pests of society."

"And how did you answer them, my lord?" said Laura.

"Solomon has given a good rule: 'Answer a fool according to his folly.' I said I could be happy with either. Thereat they were nettled. Dear, dear, dear—'tis said, woman can never hear 'praise of another with unwounded ear'; but I *should* have thought that after weathering Cape Sixty——"

"Oh, years don't make people wise," said Captain Beaufort.

"If they *could* be nettled at that," said Laura, "I declare I should have enjoyed playing them off a little."

"Well,—I did."

"I would rather not be mixed up, though, in such playing off," said Mary.

"Of course not. I had the fear of your displeasure before my eyes. So you went to the play last night."

"Yes, and got there in the middle of a comedy without beginning or end."

"How so?"

"We were too late for the beginning, and Mr. Trefusis made us laugh so that we did not hear the end."

"Ha, ha, ha! you are sure it was not a tragedy?"

"Oh yes, there was no blank verse ;

and there was a droll scene between a fanciful invalid lady and her maid."


"Let us play the scene, Laura," cried Mary, starting up. "I am sure we can give some idea of it."

"Aye, do, do!" cried Lord Harry, pushing aside the card-table in high glee.

"Bravo, girls," said their father.

To this fit audience, though few, the sisters played the little scene with the utmost spirit, partly from memory, partly impromptu, just as a charade should be played. The two auditors laughed and applauded heartily; they played better and better, and, at length, hand-in-hand, curtsied with the utmost grace, and resumed their seats and natural tones, amused and elated at their success.

"Happy father that you are, Beaufort!" cried Lord Harry.



“Well, faith, I suppose I am, my lord—they’re good girls as times go; only one is always hampered what to do with daughters, that’s the truth on’t.”

“Do with them? Keep them as long as ever you can! hide them from the eye of man! Cherish them like the apple of your eye; pet them, spoil them, hug yourself in the possession of them.”

“Till we’re as old as Hecate and Hecuba,” said Laura, merrily. “Thank you, my lord!”

“No fear of that—you’ll be snapped up long before that time comes—if it comes at all. Wit and good humour are perennial.”

“Are they? Well, I hope they are,” said Mary. “If I’m to be an old maid, there’s no reason I should be cross. Indeed, I’m determined not to be.”

“My poor girl, there’s no knowing how your determinations may be acted on in that case,” almost whimpered the captain; who meanwhile was liberally helping himself to refreshments. Chatting of this and that, they were good company till midnight; and then the motherless girls cheerfully accompanied their father across the green, waking Mr. Oldworth from his first sleep by their silver voices; while Lord Harry was supported to his bed-room by Sorel, and taken to pieces very much like a machine.

How had Lord Harry’s servants been spending the evening he had passed so pleasantly? Doing the very same thing. Sorel and the butler, and the young footman David, and the captain’s man, Mr. Richard, had been seated at a round table in the butler’s room, taking lessons of

Sorel in the very same game. They had plenty of wax ends burning; plenty of jesting, and if not plenty of classical quotations, they freely quoted the sayings of their employers. David, the fresh-coloured young Yorkshire lad, was exceedingly desirous to improve in the manners and customs of the day. So it was a thousand pities that those manners and customs were no better; and that Sorel and the butler were not more moral guides. Of the butler, we have little good to hint at; Sorel was an immeasurably better servant; perfect in his work, faultless in manner, with an occasional sturdiness indicated but never persisted in, which gave the impression of integrity and self-respect. He was honest as times went, would not take money, or break the seal of a letter on any account; only read an open one, now and

then, to enlarge his mind. He loved choice wines and liqueurs, but never took them to excess; spoke of the great world with light pleasantry and covert ridicule—never with coarseness. If he liked gossip, so did his master; if he liked play, so did Lord Harry; and neither played for high stakes.

But what he, with his high salary, could very easily afford, was by no means the case with David. When the poor lad came up from Hull, with a cargo of eggs, for a London place at London wages, he got the first but not the last. When asked what he could do, he said anything he was bid—whether he understood the work of a gentleman's house? he hoped he could learn, if the gentleman would have the kindness to try him. So the end was, David was hired at ten pounds a year,

which seemed to him munificent; and he made a private resolution to send forty shillings a year to his widowed mother. But, alas! poor David found he wanted all and more than all his wages, if he did as others did in the servants' hall, or even timidly followed in the distance. So he waited till he received his first payment, and when his fellow-servants asked him if he was now going to let fly at the pleasures of fashionable life, he gave a knowing look and said, "I'se too much Yorkshire for that."

And so he was, and too good a boy altogether at first; and he read his Bible and said his prayers night by night, except when too sleepy from hard work; and laid by his mother's portion in a little red tin box. And he sang and whistled at his work; and when Miss Flambeau saw him

cross the green with elastic step, she said it did one good to see his rosy, shining face. Sometimes she observed him stop to have a throw at skittles, or a ball at cricket ; sometimes he would turn his head to look after a servant-girl in cherry-coloured ribbons. As time passed on, and he was rising twenty, he got to say a few civil words to her ; to the regret of Miss Flambeau, who knew her for an idle baggage ; next they might be seen having chats, or standing as if they had nothing to say, and yet not going about their business.

The maid got scolded for this, and answered pertly. David did not get scolded, for there was not very close supervision of Lord Harry's servants, as long as they did their work. Better would it have been for David if there had been ;

but the lad was cast headlong into the London stream of trial and temptation, and might sink or swim—there was no one to care for his soul.

CHAPTER VI.

SUNDAY MORNING.

"Sweet day ! so calm, so pure, so bright !
Fair bridal of the earth and sky !"

GEORGE HERBERT.

MR. OLDWORTH, habitually an early riser on Sundays as well as week-days, partially opened his window as soon as the east was streaked with light ; and, as he dressed, thought how charming was the budding spring, and mentally repeated

"Sweet is the breath of morn,"

and again—

"Father of light and life ! thou good supreme,
Oh teach me what is good ; teach me thyself."

—for his mind was stored with poetry of the best sort, and his literary taste had been early cultivated. Among the mature friends who had supplied the place of younger companions in his father's lifetime, were some men of original genius, whose names were known as essayists, critics, satirists, and more than one famous poet and novelist.

As none of the family were yet stirring, he went downstairs and let himself out to take a country stroll before breakfast. All was Sabbath stillness, except as far as irrational nature was concerned; the air was sweet with the breath of cows, early yellow butterflies were on the wing, and larks were joyously singing their morning hymns at heaven's gate; only idle human beings were wasting their time in bed.

He crossed the green to the little thicket near the pond already spoken of, and sat down on the well-worn seat beneath the old tree, to inhale deep draughts of the sweet pure air, so inspiriting to a dweller in the city. Suddenly voices broke the silence on the other side of the tree, but he did not immediately pay attention to them. Some one said sharply, "Why do you follow me then? I've nothing more to say. I've told you I don't like you, and I wish you'd go away."

"Is all at an end between us, then?" said another voice, very pitifully.

"Why, goodness me, I've told you so a dozen times; why can't you believe it?"

"'Twasn't like this, Jenny, you used to go on at first."

"Dear me, who said it was? I say so now, and I mean it."

"'Tis all along of that Tom Butcher——"

"'Tisn't, then ! and if it was, it's no business of yours. Can't you believe me ?"

" Ah, well then—you really mean it ?"

" Yes, I do ! I hope that's plain."

" Ah, well then, Jenny—you've broke my heart ; but no matter——"

" Stuff and nonsense ! heart, indeed."

" Yes, it's broke ; and whatever comes of me, you'll have to answer for it."

" What a cry-baby to cry. That's not the way Tom talks, I must say. He says pretty things, and gives me pretty things——"

Mr. Oldworth indignantly rose at these words to change his place. At the same moment a girl, who looked like a servant, almost ran against him, and hastily walked

off; but not before he had a full view of a face which struck him as pretty, pert, and passionate. She was an offence to him, and stepping into the thicket, he saw a lad in a linen jacket, whose face was pale and smeared with tears, take a sudden run to the pond, as if to leap desperately into the deepest part. He only saved him by instantly interposing himself and almost getting knocked down for his pains; but he grasped his arm firmly at the same moment, saying with kind reproach, "You silly boy!"

"Let me go! let me go!" gasped the lad, struggling violently and panting; but Mr. Oldworth, by dint of sheer moral and muscular strength, drew him down beside him on the bench, and held him there.

"My good lad," said he, "you are acting very foolishly."

"Let me go then, I say," said the youth, hitting him a violent blow on the wrist, which occasioned such sudden pain that he almost relaxed his hold. Still maintaining it, however, he said temperately, "My dear lad, you are hitting your friend."

The boy's face suddenly changed. "Friend?" repeated he, dropping his under-lip, and looking at him vacantly.

"Why, what on earth should otherwise have made me check you in the commission of a very foolish act?" said Mr. Oldworth. "You will be very glad I did so before an hour has passed; nay, I hope you will before we part."

"No, I want to die——" said the lad, restlessly.

"Want to die? why, the next moment you would want to be alive again. What

sort of company do you suppose you would be in, at this instant, had I let you do what you wanted? Answer me that."

The boy shuddered, and large tears began to course his cheeks. "Sir, I see you're a gentleman," said he, in broken accents, "but — oh, I'm so very, very unhappy——"

"My good boy, I see it, I know it; but don't let us make things worse than they are already. Brighter hours may come."

"Not for me," crying bitterly.

"Yes, yes, for you; and many of them. Why, dear me, this girl you think so much of may come to a better mind."

"May she, sir?" with a faint dawn of hope.

"She may, and for her own sake it is

to be hoped she will; though, mark me, she does not appear to me at all worthy of your affection. She appears to me thoroughly undeserving."

"Do you know her, sir?"

"Not I! but she checked her voice so little that I could not help hearing every word she said; and I must say I think she is not in the least worth a sensible young fellow's wasting thought upon, much less his life. Why, how much do you suppose she would care if she got rid of you? And on a Sunday morning, too, of all others, which, I dare say, your good mother taught you should be kept holy. Come, come; go home, my good boy, do your morning's work, dress for church, go there, and mind what you hear there. Ask God to forgive you, and to befriend you."

Deeply sighing, the poor lad said,—

“Sir, I will. . . . you’re a true friend, sir; and oh! to think I should have struck you!”

“Ah, well, never mind that——”

“Please, sir, forget it and forgive me—I ask it humbly of you.”

“Yes, yes, of course—only go and be a good boy; and, John—your name’s John, is not it?”

“Please, sir, I’d rather not tell my name,” hanging his head.

“Oh, very well, never mind. Only remember, that God will always be your Friend, if you will have Him. You have affronted Him just now, and should beg His pardon more humbly than you asked mine. Good-bye.”

“May God bless you, sir.” And he went away, with his head drooping on his

chest, slowly at first, but gradually quickening his pace to a run till he was lost sight of in the offices of a large house with tall iron gates. Mr. Oldworth looked after him with pity.

“Here, now, is another country lad being spoilt,” thought he. He seemed to have some previous cases in his head. “All for want of a little Christian oversight, probably,” and abundance of bad example. That worthless girl will soon recover her ascendancy over him, if she cares for it, and give more broad hints for ‘pretty presents’—the baggage!”

He rose, and walked round the other side of the common; thinking how sin and evil penetrated into even the quietest places, and increased in power and effrontery wherever people most congregated; but not believing, in spite of all,

that young goodness and freshness and purity were extinct, under the shelter of careful parents and protectors who invoked the grace of God. Passing the substantial, thoroughly comfortable rectory, he was startled by a loud, deep, cheery voice crying, "Joe—Joe!" and looking up he saw at a first-floor window, embowered in spring leaves, a man in his shirt-sleeves, with a brush in one hand and a comb in the other.

"Why, Tom! who would have thought of seeing you?"

"Who would have thought of seeing you?" retorted the Rev. Thomas Bellarmine. "My being here is easily explained. That villain Gout laid hold of the Dean's great toe and pulled him bodily upstairs by it. So he sent for Dr. Bigsby to preach a charity sermon for him, and Bigsby sent

yesterday evening to Lady Di for me, and is gone to London, leaving me in charge."

"I'm in luck's way," said Mr. Oldworth, "and shall enjoy hearing you, of all things."

"Of all men, you mean, old boy. Oh, I'll touch you up in the vein of Boanerges."

"The sons of thunder," remarked his friend, "when they received their apostolic mission, turned out two of the gentlest, most tender, and loving of preachers."

"The sons of Zebedee? You say true."

"And I hope you'll remind us of them to-day, for there will be at least one sore heart in church, into which you may pour balm."

"Not yours, I hope—hey?"


"Not mine."

"All right, I'll do my best. I must shut my window now, for here comes the milkmaid."

Tom Bellarmine was certainly in advance of his time, for he belonged to what would now be called the muscular Christians. But, in fact, he belonged to nobody but himself, and was not generally quite understood or appreciated by those accustomed to sit under a ministry that "never mentioned hell to ears polite."

When he appeared in Dr. Bigsby's place, many thought, "What a fine man!" and admired the richness of his voice, the freedom of his action; but soon after his giving out his text, which consisted of only three words—"Come unto Me"—and thinking how short it was, they settled

themselves into their usual postures of well-bred inattention. These were mainly the rich; to the poor the gospel was preached, and this time not altogether in vain. It distilled like the softening rain on thirsty ground. Others, in solitary instances, were impressed and profited. Not Lord Harry—he never went to church; not the Beauforts—they were among the dull-eared. Mary was chiefly employed in preventing her father from snoring; and Laura's thoughts ranged over a thousand trifles. But Miss Flambeau was greatly affected; so were one or two poor widows, and a little lame dressmaker. Mr. Oldworth's attention was distracted by the entry, rather late in the service, of two or three men-servants in rich liveries, who were very restless and inattentive, with the exception of the youngest, who sat in the



lowest place. This lad, who had dark circles round his eyes and very pale cheeks, never once looked up, right or left, during the prayers, but leant forward, with an arm on his knee, or rose and sat down mechanically when others did, without turning a leaf of his book. But when Mr. Bellarmine repeated his text a second time, after a pause, in a most touching manner, the boy started from head to foot, looked full at him for a moment, and then down again, resuming his drooping attitude. But Mr. Oldworth, with the intuition of sympathy, was satisfied that he was intensely listening, and that every word (as it will do sometimes) hit the mark. Of course he knew the lad again; and of course he was David. At first his look was of dejection almost amounting to despair; then it softened into melancholy; gradually it seemed

to betoken humble submission ; and heavy tears dropped on the floor as he bent his head. But when Bellarmine spoke of the Christian's forgiveness, hope, and crown of rejoicing, David's face cleared and brightened with joy—for sorrow is foreign to young natures, after all. His companions were fast asleep.

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CHAPTER VII.

HARRY LEVITT.

Candid, and generous, and just,
Boys care but little whom they trust;
 An error soon corrected—
For who but learns, in riper years,
That man, when smoothest he appears,
Is most to be suspected?

COWPER.

IN the course of Mr. Oldworth's evening stroll with his aunt, along a lane bounded on one side by Lord Harry's moss-grown shrubbery-paling, and on the other by a privet hedge, he told her of the occurrence before breakfast, at which Miss Flambeau was greatly shocked and scandalized. She

identified the girl at once, and called her sundry hard names no longer in use, expressive of her worthless, paltry nature; and ascribed the declension of half the servant lads *in esse* to acquaintance of her sort, who needed to be under the eye of a sharp mistress, and reflected infinite discredit on the bringing-up of their mothers. She quite deplored having no access to Jenny that she might give her a good talking: as to David, she was almost too lenient to him, her feelings were so touched.

“Dear me, nephew,” said she, in conclusion, “you cannot so much as go abroad for ten minutes before breakfast without meeting with a little adventure, a jilt, a despairing lover, a quarrel and attempted suicide, while I, watching the green all day, only see the Miss Beauforts go to Lord

Harry's, and the butcher and doctor's boy play cricket."

Mr. Oldworth laughed, and said Harry Levitt always called his existence prosaic.

"Oh, and, by the bye, how *is* Harry? What is he doing? How is he getting on?"

"Oh, poor Harry! he's always in some scrape or other. One of the rolling stones that gather no moss. Always running through his money, but the pleasantest fellow! He was certainly intended to make a figure in the world, if he had but stability."

"What a 'but' that is, though!" said Miss Betty.

"There's no harm in him. He wants nothing but a good wife——"

"And stability."

"A wife, I was going to say, who would give him stability?"

"Do you believe any wife *could*?"

"Oh yes—oh yes. In fact, his versatility is occasioned by his genius. He has so many gifts that one of them is always drawing him away from another. Now learning the perfect art of fence—now delighting the coffee-houses with an essay—now serving a campaign abroad—now writing a comedy, now a man of business."

"If he succeeded in any one of these lines, I might grant him a genius," said Miss Betty, "but in which has he attained celebrity? He may be a good swordsman—the less he has occasion to be one, the better. As for his authorship, every one, I'm told, writes now, pretty well or rather badly. He soon got tired of the counting-house. He tried soldiering when he had

better have stuck to his ledger. What call had he to go abroad ? ”

“ To acquire languages and learn mankind.”

“ Learn fiddlestick ! ” said Miss Flambeau. “ Mankind are not to be learnt in six lessons. He had better have begun with mastering one particular specimen, ‘ *Know thyself.* ’ ”

Mr. Oldworth laughed and called her severe. “ I’ll bring him to you some Sunday—” began he. “ Oh, for goodness’ sake, don’t ! ” cried Miss Flambeau in alarm.

“ Why not, my dear aunt ? ”

“ Because I’ve a horror of that sort of young fellow. The more delightful he is, the more dangerous.”

“ I don’t believe he’d endanger you. And you might greatly benefit him.”

“Not a chance of it,” said she, laughing. “Geniuses of that sort are not given to put themselves under the training of a maiden aunt. I’m not his aunt, that’s one comfort; though you are his cousin. I’m not his aunt, or I might think it my duty to sermonize him now and then, though ’twould be of no use.”

“What about? He’s not an immoral man.”

“About drifting from one thing to another. About wasting money, and borrowing it. About a good many things.”

“Ah well, you think too hardly of him; though poor Hal might be amended. Miss Tolhurst appreciates him much better than you do.”

“Miss Tolhurst?” said his aunt, stopping short.

“Miss Tolhurst, and Mr. Tolhurst. I

took him down to dine with them lately."

"Oh, nephew, take care what you do! What an unnecessary imprudence that was!"

"Where was the imprudence?"

"She might like him better than you."

"That did not occur to me," said he, calmly. "I only thought to give pleasure to my friend; and my friends. And if she should like him better than me—nay, aunt, she is free to choose between us."

"My poor Joseph, I fear you have been very thoughtless."

"Oh no—oh no."

The neat maid, who had taken care of Mrs. Flambeau in her daughter's absence, had read her to sleep; so that she woke up on their return, quite refreshed for the evening; and as she was past church-

going, she asked Mr. Oldworth to read her something; suggesting, like the mouse in "The frog he would," that he should not let the subject be very long. He referred the choice of it to his aunt; and she selected a certain passage of Addison's which she said was a great favourite of her mother's. The reason it was a favourite was because she thought it exactly described himself; which of course he was not aware of. The passage was this: "When I look into the frame and constitution of my own mind, there is no part of it which I observe with greater satisfaction than that tenderness and concern which it bears for the good and happiness of mankind. My own circumstances are, indeed, so narrow and scanty that I should taste but very little pleasure, could I receive it only from those enjoyments which are in

my own possession; but by this great tincture of humanity, which I find in all my thoughts and reflections, I am happier than any single person can be, with all the wealth, strength, beauty, and success that can be conferred upon a mortal, if he only relishes such a proportion of these blessings as is vested in himself and in his own private property. By this means, any man that does himself any real service, does me a kindness. I come in for my share of all the good that happens to a man of merit and virtue, and partake of many gifts of fortune and power that I was never born to. There is nothing, especially, in which I so much rejoice, as the deliverance of good and generous spirits out of dangers, difficulties, and distress."

"That's such a favourite passage of

mine," said Mrs. Flambeau, just as if she were making a new remark; and giving her daughter a very meaning smile. Of course we must pity the minds that could be content with such wish-wash as Addison's in the absence of the delightfully sensational literature now afforded us in such abundance; but then they did not know what was in reserve for a happier generation; and after all, in mature and declining years the sensational may be less satisfying than the contemplative and sedative.

When they wished each other good night, Mr. Oldworth observed that he should start early the next morning, to breakfast with Mr. Tolhurst.

"If it were with any one else, I should have a word to say against that," said Miss Flambeau; "but since Miss Tolhurst

of course is included—well, I say nothing. By the by, what is her Christian name?"

"Lucy."

"A sweet pretty name."

"As pretty as herself."

Mr. Oldworth started at six the next morning, while the dew was yet sparkling on the gossamer; and making for the waterside, he was just seating himself in a wherry when a well-known voice hailed him with—

"Joe! Joe! where are you for? I'm for you——"

And Bellarmine leaped into the boat, making it tremble under him.

"I've been having an early bath," said he, heartily shaking hands, "and now I'm for an early row. Are you going to take a scull?"

"No indeed, I'm lazy enough to prefer

being sculled—especially with a sprained wrist.”

“Oh, well, a lazy man must have his way, but ’tis fine exercise. Going down the river, I suppose?”

“Yes; citywards.”

“Breakfasted?”

“No, I mean to do that at Chiswick.”

“It don’t matter to me which way I go, so that I get the walk back. If you *will* be idle, so will I. Talking is even better than rowing.”

The waterman pushed off, and the friends launched into a sea of chat; chiefly about Mr. Bellarmine’s prospects, which seemed rather vague.

He had his own way to make in life—was reading very hard, and taking plenty of exercise to counteract its ill effects—going into society more than he liked, to

please Lady Di, who had influence with her brother the Dean. His mother wanted country air; he meant to take a lodging for her on the green, and be with her whenever he could. Mr. Oldworth inquired into his studies, and was surprised at their extent.

“Well,” said Bellarmine, “it’s no good doing things by halves—and my mark is set pretty high—as high, maybe, as a bishopric.”

“Do you call *that* high? I had deemed your views a good deal higher—than anything worldly.”

“Well,” groaned Bellarmine, “that would be the case if I could get any one to understand me; but—in fact, there’s one particular person whom I specially wish to please.”

“Is she ambitious, then?”

“Ah, you guess the right gender at once. No, she’s not ambitious, but she’s a woman of fashion and highly connected; and I might as well set my heart on one particular star as presume to offer her poverty and obscurity. By the way,’ suddenly changing the subject, “never did I preach to such sleepyheads” as in yonder church on the green. Joe, they turned in, habitually, to their naps; and I might as well have preached to the church-door nails. By the by, there was a young serving-man whose tears gushed forth. I could almost hear them plop on the stones.”

“Oh, what, you marked him——”

“Yes, did you?”

“Yes, I’d spoken to him previously— saved him from a desperate deed, in fact. He ended by being much obliged to me;

I was so sorry to be unable to improve the occasion as you would. I told him to go to church, which, as the event proved, was excellent advice. It was just the case for 'some discreet and godly minister.' ”

“Poor chap! What lots of people want a little good advice; and how few of them will take it!—Joe, will you go with me to-morrow to Ranelagh? I seldom go to such places, you know; but Lady Di is going to take Miss Pomeroy, and I should like you to see her.”

“Certainly I should like to see a lady of whom you (at present) think so highly.”

“I owe you a grudge for that parenthesis!—just as if I were given to change!”

Talking of one thing and another, they reached Chiswick, and went their several ways, after a most cordial parting. Mr. Oldworth reached Mr. Tolhurst's gate a


little before eight o'clock. The servant told him he would find her master in the garden. Thither he repaired, therefore, and found the worthy merchant in his dressing-gown, looking after his fruit-blossoms on the wall, while his daughter, fresh as the spring morning, was busy with her hyacinths. She was a slender, very pretty girl, with an expression frank and innocent.

"Here's Mr. Oldworth, sir," said she, touching her father on the arm, and blushing a little.

"Joe! how are you? And why did you not come yesterday? We had as fine a fillet of veal as ever was stuffed."

"There are always greater temptations here, sir, than any afforded by the table."

"But we had the first green gooseberries too—gooseberries grown on the



premises. Your friend the Captain obliged us with his company, and very good company he is."

"Mr. Levitt does not call himself Captain now, papa," suggested Lucy.

"Well, but I do, if he doesn't. Once a captain, always a captain, the saying is. He was mighty diverting, I assure you, Joe, and told us heaps of amusing stories. One was about the King of Prussia and a cheese, and what an Irishman said about it."

"Papa, you are confusing two stories a little——"

"Oh, am I? (don't think I am, though) but my memory is not what it was. Why, when I was a boy, Joe, I could have told you all the signs from here to London! told 'em off in proper order, without mistake!"

“A great exercise of memory, sir.”

“Yes, I believe it was! Oh! I’ve not a bad memory. Book learning is another affair. But your cousin has both. He has a smattering of everything, hasn’t he, Lucy?”

This was just what Levitt had, and Mr. Oldworth could heartily assent; but when he found the impression Hal had made in so short a time, on father and daughter—deferring to the former, reading tender poetry to Lucy, and singing out of the same hymn-book at church—he had a strange misgiving.

CHAPTER VIII.

RANELAGH.

"To Ranelagh once in my life
By good-natured force I was driven,
The nations had ceased from their strife,
And Peace beamed her radiance from heaven.
What wonders were here to be found
That a clown might enjoy or disdain?
First, we traced the gay circle all around,
And—then we went round it again."

BLOOMFIELD.

THE next evening, Mr. Oldworth and his friend passed the magic circle round the Rotunda with praiseworthy perseverance, amid a well-dressed throng who kept up an incessant fire of small talk which nearly drowned the strains of Dr. Arne's delicious music. The chief amusement seemed see-

ing and being seen by one another. Mr. Bellarmine was abstracted and rather out of sorts; he was looking for some one who did not come. Now and then he nudged his companion and muttered "Pacchierotte—Dr. Solander—the Dean of St. Paul's—Mrs. Thrale." At length he broke forth with—

"What the use of this stupid place is, I never can understand. We repeat the same dull round like horses in a mill. One may look for a friend with as much likelihood of success as for a needle in a bottle of hay. The music is detestable; and were it good, there is such an incessant cackle of thin high-pitched voices that one could not do it justice."

"It seems to me," said Mr. Oldworth, "that in thus walking round and round,


we take the very best means of missing any one who is doing the same thing, either behind or in advance."

"Why, to be sure we do!" said Bellarmine, stopping so suddenly as to run foul of the party immediately behind; a little beyond whom, to his inexpressible delight, he saw Lady Di and Miss Pomeroy with a little knot of friends. No more grumbling was heard from him; an animated and courteous greeting ensued, and thenceforth the two friends were their escorts round the ring.

Miss Pomeroy struck Mr. Oldworth as a very perfect specimen of womanhood; beautiful, dignified, graceful, with an expression of intellect and sweetness. Bellarmine's manner, directly they met, changed very much, and had a reverential deference that became him well. This

gradually merged, however, into his natural manner a little softened, and he and Miss Pomeroy seemed to desire no amusement beyond each other's conversation; while Lady Di, who knew everybody that was anybody, had a smile for one, a nod for another, a tap of the fan for a third;—what Bellarmine called “a word and a blow, and the blow came first.” She was a woman of the world, entertaining and tolerably sensible, but seemed to think the world chiefly existed for *les gens comme il faut*, and that as long as they amused themselves, not too much at the expense of one another, they fulfilled the aim and end of their existence.

At length she proposed tea, and led the way to one of the boxes within the Rotunda destined for refreshments. Here



the lively things that were said and laughed at, the buzz of numerous voices, the lights reflected in mirrors, and the gushes of sweet music, heard from time to time, made a sort of fool's paradise. Lady Di kept up a running commentary on the general company.

“That's Dr. Johnson, as big and heavy as his dictionary; that's Bennet Langton, a mighty pleasant man. Those two pretty girls in blue are the Miss Beauforts—they are much run after, though no fortunes. That's their father, a wrinkled *petit maître* that has not learnt how to grow old. The world gives his eldest daughter to Lord Harry Bellair.”

“To a man more than half a century her senior?” cried Bellarmine. “You cannot mean that that lovely girl is to be so sacrificed?”

"Aye, and willingly too," said Lady Di, laughing. "So everybody says."

"They have a great regard for one another, I am told," said Miss Pomeroy, "and by all accounts he has wit enough to be still very entertaining when in the vein; but I cannot credit the report of her intending to marry him, and believe it to be mere scandal circulated by the envious."

"I am glad you think so, and hope you are in the right," said Bellarmine, who had just been looking at Mary Beaufort with repulsion.

"Arbell always takes the romantic side," said Lady Di, "but you may rely on it for truth—the wedding clothes are ordered."

"Well, I am sorry—" said Miss Pomeroy gravely—so gravely, that Bellar-

mine said in a low voice : " You think, then, title and riches insufficient temptation—— "

" I think them no temptation."

" But we live in such an artificial state of society—— "

" That I, for one, would rather live out of it."

" Do you really mean that you could readily give up the train of pleasures comprised in a London spring ? "

" Yes ; because to me they are no pleasures."

" And yet it is only a year since you were presented !"

" It is, when I come to consider it, a year ; but what a long one !"

" I imagine, though," said Bellarmine, getting very much interested in his subject, " that if you were to return now to your

Shropshire home, you would find its simple pleasures palled."

"Ah, do not speak of my Shropshire home," said she quickly. "I lost it when I lost my dear father; one is always associated with the other. I *cannot* ever have that home again, such as it was in its early brightness, with its hearty hospitality, and constant cheerfulness; because my father made it what it was. Should I ever revisit it, my heart will be full of sadness. I can never know such a happy home again."

Tom fell into reverie. The buzz of voices and gushes of music fell on his ear without his noticing them. Presently he said: "Your surroundings in that home were doubtless very choice. Old, ancestral trees, extensive gardens, the best country society, plenty of intelligent guests whom

you could entertain with ease, a goodly staff of servants, the means of riding or driving at your choice when you went abroad——”

“Yes, that was pretty much the case,” said Miss Pomeroy, “though my father did not live quite as expensively as you imagine.”

“Then,” pursued Bellarmine, “within-doors you would have every luxury and elegance that would gratify refined taste—choice books, new and old, beautiful pictures, well-furnished apartments——”

“All these,” said she, softly, “would be nothing to me, if offered by a Lord Harry, because he is one, if report say true, (though indeed it is little to be trusted) who has never made religious faith his sheet-anchor.”

“I honour you, madam !” said Tom, in

his full, rich-toned voice, which made those immediately about him look round and smile. He smiled too, and felt sorry he had forgotten where he was and by whom surrounded; while Miss Pomeroy looked attentively at one of the oval paintings and said she pitied artists who had to paint ceilings—the trouble must be disproportioned to the reward.

After attending the ladies to their carriage, the friends made their way homewards together till their paths diverged; and Bellarmine was eager to know Mr. Oldworth's opinion of Miss Pomeroy, and but half satisfied with his praises, though they were warmly bestowed.

“Ah,” said he, “she is all that, and a great deal more. I'm afraid, nay, I know I'm sadly unworthy of her.”

“I cannot think that.”

“And even if I were not, what a home could I afford her, after the one to which she has been accustomed?”

“At present you have none; but I am certain, Bellarmine, you will one of these days have a country parsonage, or a good town living; and if she is not content with either, when offered by such a man as you are—I’ve rated her too highly, that’s all!”

“Ah, I little deserve her—I’m altogether unworthy. But the best of it is, that I have just the very least mite of a hope that—she doesn’t think me so herself!”

CHAPTER IV

WIFE AND HUSBAND

"But poverty with me is a winner's trick
Their long complaints is self-inflicted war."

LOWELL.

"Yes, I think we may manage it," said Mary Beaufort, looking up from her account book at Laura, who was producing some *disputes* from a *quitter*.

"That's a blessing," said Laura. "When you decide that you can manage a thing, I know that it will be managed. What a blessing that one of us has a head for figures!"

"Rather hard on me, though," said

Mary. "I have to furnish management for three."

" 'Julia's a manager; she's born to rule——' " said Laura, laughing.

"Don't think to put me off with a pert quotation, miss. I think you and papa are perfectly——"

"What?"

"Abominable."

"Oh, how flat! I thought you were going to say something original. In what are we abominable, pray?"

"In spending so much money, and never caring."

"Really, Mary, I think you are too hard on papa. He spends very little for a man."

"He never denies himself anything, however short our means may be. I'm actually afraid of his getting into the Fleet

some day, and only think what a disgrace !”

“ Disgrace ? yes indeed ! but who would ever dread such a thing, except in a fit of the blues ? He dresses well, but not to excess : does not drink much wine when we are by ourselves ; often gets a very bad dinner, and as to play, he oftener wins than loses. So that really, Mary, I think you unjust.”

“ Well, I may have been so, but it is difficult to be just when one can’t make both ends meet.”

“ And as for me——”

“ Your court dress, madame——”

“ Well,” persisted Laura, “ could I go to court without a dress ? And could I be presented abroad if I had not been presented at home ? Don’t be absurd, Mary You know we must conform to the usages.

of society. Lord Harry says we always dress within the bounds of fashion; and means it to our praise."

"Small praise is due to us, I fear," said Mary. "We don't dress better, because we can't afford it."

"Then, if we ought not to be praised in one case, we ought not to be blamed in the other. We can't do more than we can."

"Undeniably not. Then, taking our affairs into consideration, I do not see how we can do better than go abroad."

"For my part, I think the idea delightful," said Laura, with animation. "We shall have a few good introductions, see everything worth seeing, and at very little expense."

"And our term of this house is just out, and we shall get rid of cook and her

hangers-on, which of itself will be worth trying the plan for; and we shall take Richard and Danvers with us——”

At this moment, Richard noiselessly entered with a note on a salver, having delivered which to Miss Beaufort, he as noiselessly withdrew.

“Richard knows all about it,” said Laura, smiling.

“Nonsense, he could not hear what I said,” replied Mary, who did not relish the idea of his spreading her plans all round the Green. She ran through the note, and then threw it to Laura, exclaiming, “How well he writes! The commonest message is made the vehicle of wit and feeling.”

“What a lover he would have been, fifty years ago! He writes like one now.”

“Nonsense!”

"Any one would think so, who picked the note up by accident, and did not know the writer."

"Let us change the subject, Laura, for this displeases me."

"Since I am to change the subject," said Laura, "I will tell you of my visit to Mrs. Penruddock. My dear Mary, she is the prettiest little woman imaginable, with every pretty thing conceivable grouped about her—statuettes, vases, flowers, bijouterie, scents, beautifully bound books—ah! how happy a woman still young and pretty must be with such surroundings!"

"I should think so," said Mary, gloomily.

"Lady Juliana told me," said Laura, after a pause, and rising and placing her hand on her sister's shoulder, as she stood behind her chair, "that Mrs. Penruddock

had been married, while scarcely out of the school-room, to a man fifteen years older than her father——”

“More shame to those who compelled her,” cried Mary. “What is it to me, Laura? Why do you tell me of this sacrifice?”

“It was a sacrifice, certainly,” said Laura, dropping her voice, and looking away; “but—Mr. Penruddock died, you see, in a few years; and—now, she is her own mistress, with unbounded opportunities of being good and generous to others.”

“Laura, I know what you are thinking of,” said Mary. “Do not talk or even think of it again. I am ashamed of you! What! are you so coolly prepared to make a victim of me, only for the worldly advantage of papa and yourself?”

Laura looked ashamed, and began: "I was not thinking of myself—I——"

"You *were* thinking of yourself," said Mary; "while I, who am contriving and planning for you all day, who always think of you and papa first——" Here she suddenly burst into tears, and hid her face in her hands, saying, "Poor motherless girls."

Laura began to cry too, and took her hand and kissed her, saying, "Forgive me, Mary. I was very wrong—oh, I'm so sorry, so sorry."

Mary dried her eyes and returned her kiss; and, at the same moment, Richard stood before her and said, "Lord Harry's servant, ma'am, waits for an answer."

"Richard, you are always coming in when nobody wants you," said Miss Beaufort, with asperity. "Your manners grow worse and worse; nobody would take you

for a gentleman's servant. Why did not you tell me sooner that Lord Harry's man was waiting? Retire till I ring."

Richard withdrew with the utmost meekness.

"How tiresome everything is," said Mary. "And my last sheet of gold-edged paper is creased. Of course I had better say we will come. Mind, Laura, that you do not drop a word of our plans. It will be best for them not to be known yet."

"Yes, I think with you," said Laura. "I will be as silent as a dormouse."

"Ring for Richard now."

Richard answered the bell rather more tardily than usual, and carried away the note. Mary remained musing.

"The more I think of it, the more expedient it appears," said she at length.

"I only hope papa will not be wrong-headed about it."

"That would be vexatious, certainly," said Laura. "How shall you put it to him?"

"Leave me to manage."

"With all my heart; for you usually manage *him*," said Laura.

"Oh, I wish I did!" said Mary, ruefully.

Talk of a person and he appears. Enter the Captain.

"Why, Mary, you look as if you had the weight of the world on your shoulders," said he.

"So I have—of our little domestic world," said Mary.

"What's the matter?"

"The old story—want of money."

"For goodness' sake, don't ask me

for any," said her father, throwing out his hands. "I haven't a penny for a beggar."

"I'm sure beggars have no claim on us—even for a penny," said Mary. "People must be just before they are generous, and pay their way."

"I'll tell you what it is, girls—we must retrench."

"But in what?"

"Oh, hang it, I can't go into details of soap and candles. We had better take a decided step at once, and go abroad."

"Really, papa, I think that a very good idea; but are you sure we can manage it?"

"Manage it? yes. Things are dog-cheap on the Continent. We can live *en prince* on what we here muddle through without either show or comfort."

"I am sure, papa, if you think it a good plan, Laura and I will try it."

"I do think it a good plan—the best of plans—and shall like amazingly to run through Europe."

"We shall run through our means first, though, if we don't all practise economy."

"Pish!—dividend-day is at hand."

"Yes, but quarter-day comes first, and the rent——"

"Needn't be paid till just before we start."

"You will not keep on this house?"

"Most certainly not. I'll give warning directly if you like. And now about our route." Down he sat to the map of Europe with the avidity of a boy. "When things are at the worst, they mend," said he, gaily. "Nothing but your being at

your wits' end would have driven me to this brilliant remedy."

"Papa, Lord Harry wants us this evening."

"With all my heart."

"It will be better for us not to mention to him anything about this scheme."

"Why?"

"Because he would counteract it."

"Not he."

"At any rate, he would try to do so. It would vex him very much."

"Why, we are not in bondage to him, are we?"

"No—only he depends on us very much for interest and amusement; and if he finds he is going to lose us, it will vex him. Out of kindness to him, we should keep it from him till all is settled."

"Well, it may be so," said Captain Beaufort, dubiously.

"So promise me, papa, that you will not let it slip out."

"Oh, I won't let it slip out."

And then they discussed their route with eagerness.

That evening, they were all very guarded, and Lord Harry did not know how the ground was crumbling under him. Next day, Mary called on some of her acquaintances. She returned in great agitation and anger; and, instead of giving Laura the least clue to the origin of her trouble, she scribbled a note as fast as her pen could fly over the paper, sealed it, and despatched Richard with it to Lord Harry. Then she threw herself on the sofa, and covered her eyes with her hand.

"What is the matter, Mary?" said Laura.

"Matter enough," said Mary, in stifled accents. "My imagined engagement to Lord Harry is the talk of the whole town. I have distinctly traced it to those vile old women and himself."

"Absurd! abominable!"

"Ah," said Mary, groaning, "there's nothing so absurd, so abominable, that this stupid world will not believe. It is Lord Harry's own fault—he has punished himself. But I have spoken pretty plainly to him."

Laura looked rather dismayed, and said—

"I hope you have not insulted him. He is very prone to take offence."

"And why should not I be prone to take offence?" said Mary. "I don't see

why I should be the one who is never to be offended."

"No; only—you have always had such an even temper, dear Mary."

"Don't tell stories, Laura; nor try to throw dust in my eyes. I have no brother, no father, to stand up for me; you know as well as I do, papa will not, and I must stand up for myself. People *shall* not tell such falsehoods of me. The whole world shall hear me repudiate them."

Poor Mary; she was quite mistaken in thinking the whole world cared a straw about the matter, or that the whole town was talking of it. "Give me my smelling-bottle, Laura;" but the smelling-bottle did her no good.

Laura, at her wit's end, sat perfectly silent a little while. Thinking to afford a seasonable change of subject she presently

said, "I wonder if my old brown paduasoy will do to travel in."

"Most certainly not. It's all in slits."

"But they would not show in a carriage."

"But they would every time you got into it or out of it. Don't be absurd, Laura; you can't go about like a beggar."

"I've no wish to do so, I'm sure :

" 'Bid her wear your necklace rowed with pearl,
You'll find your Fanny an obedient girl.' "

"That's as true as if it were prose."

"Am I to have a new dress, then?"

"You must wear your black lutestring. Black is very commonly worn on the Continent. Indeed, you cannot go to some places in anything else."

"What are you going to wear?"

"My black lutestring."

"Papa will not like to see us in mourning."

"We can wear coloured ribbons and gloves."

"Are you sure, Mary, that your lute-string is in good condition?"

"Yes—no—what a tiresome body you are, to worry one so about things of no immediate importance. I remember some coffee was spilt on my lutestring, the last time I wore it. The breadth must be turned."

"Might not Danvers as well do it at once, then, while she is tolerably disengaged, instead of putting it off till we are all in a bustle?"

"Yes, I think she might," said Mary, rising wearily, to go to her room; and Laura had the satisfaction of thinking she

had really roused her from her fit of despondency.

Mary was in deep consultation with Danvers on the black lutestring, when a letter was brought her from Lord Harry.

CHAPTER X.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

“—— the plague
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downwards all the graduated scale.”

COWPER.

“WHAT is all this about?” stammered Lord Harry, in agitation, as he hastily skimmed Mary’s note in his bedroom, scarcely roused from his siesta. “What are these causeless, these cruel words? Sorel, you villain! this note has been tampered with!”

“Not in this house, my lord,” said

Sorel. "I took it from Captain Beaufort's man myself; and, saving your lordship's assertion, the seal was as I received it."

"I trust that you speak truth, sirrah, for I would not keep a servant an hour who tampered with a letter of mine—not an hour, sir!"

"How does this apply to me, my lord? I am guiltless."

"Draw up the blind and give me more light. Too much! too much! you blind me. Stand further off. (I fancy some people can read up-and-down.) Come back, sir!" in sharp accents, as Sorel was noiselessly leaving the room. "Come back, and bring me my writing-case. Here is a strange mistake I must rectify on the instant. Put my hand-bell nearer, you have placed it out of reach. You may go now; go, I say, I desire to be alone

—Oh, life, life, what a life is this!" groaned he, as Sorel closed the door after him. "My Mary! who can have been traducing me thus, and distorting a few idle words? Some spiteful wretch, envious of your beauty and serenity, has wantonly done it." (Such was the tenor of the rapidly-written note which the nervous trembling of his hand made almost illegible.) "Don't believe her, my angel. Don't believe them, for there are doubtless a brace or a dozen of them. The malignity of the world increases more and more. I *would* not live in it always! But, since we do live, (and may you, sweet child, have length of days and exceptional felicity) do let us make the best of it, enjoy the harmless sweets, which, after all, are many, and never go out of our way to gather thorns that don't rightfully belong

to our path. You have done this now, Mary. You have made yourself angry, and me miserable. I do not blame you, my dear. Fine sensibilities are always readily wounded. But show your fine, high womanly nature above the reach of these mean creatures, whose envenomed tattle is utterly destitute of foundation. Don't you remember how we laughed at their virulence and folly at the time, when I unhesitatingly told you of it? I've never seen them since ! All this has been trumped up by themselves ! Invention, I give you my word for it ! I trust I know better what is due to you, and to myself, than to give the slightest sanction for your name being thus used. Oh, Mary, you cannot tell how ill I am this morning, nor how completely this has unhinged me. Bear with me, my young friend, if I be-

tray irritation : my years, my infirmities may excuse it. Bear with an old man, a pitiable invalid, whose sad hours have been solaced by your intelligence and sweetness. All the world may envy me your conversation ; more I have never asked. I shall not trouble you much longer, for I decline day by day ; but do not, my idol, poison the few last hours of a life which you only can sweeten.

“ P.S.—Mind you all come to-night. I shall look for it as the token of peace.”

This note appeased Mary, who was hot but very placable ; and as she really had some natural greatness, which, under better training, might have developed into a fine character, she would not wound Lord Harry by the slightest recurrence to the past, when they met. He, on his part, was anxious for the first signal of

forgiveness, and, as he held her white hand lingeringly in his, and found it not immediately withdrawn, he felt assured they were reconciled.

So they had one of their pleasantest evenings ; for Mary, relieved of her worry, was her brightest and loveliest ; Laura could always play a good second ; their father had that aptitude for being amused and keeping up the ball which is one of the elements of good-fellowship ; and Lord Harry, witty and delightful when not sick and querulous, had an additional motive given him by the morning's *tiff* to appear in his very best colours. They talked, therefore, and laughed, and quoted, and paid happy compliments—always keeping clear of vexed questions—and amused themselves with some fashionable game—the very same their servants were playing

downstairs. David was no novice at play now. At first he had only looked on, while he kept supplying his fellow-servants with fresh wax-ends as the others burnt out. Sorel had an easy indulgence for the lad, and one evening when they were regaling themselves between the deals, he gave him a glass of rich liqueur. The boy's naïve surprise and delight at it amused the party so much, that thenceforth, from time to time, they treated him, (at Lord Harry's expense) he resisting less and less, though he said it was mortal strong, till at length he came to look for it, and was disappointed if he missed it. Once, when the tray had been brought from Lord Harry's room, and stood temptingly in David's reach, seemingly no one near it but himself, he, after a moment's hesitation, pocketed a macaroon, and swal-

lowed a glass of liqueur. As he set down the glass, some one said "Oho!" and he met the meaning smile of one of the under-servants. David coloured scarlet and went away without a word. He had not replaced the macaroon, he was not sure its abstraction had been observed; but swallow it he could not. It would surprise you to know what trouble he had in disposing of it—in burying his sin out of his sight. At length he took it into a small copse in the grounds, got among the brushwood, and crushed the macaroon with his heel till it crumbled to powder. Then he scraped the fallen leaves over it, and went homeward with a deep sigh.

But the first wrong step had been taken. And though he did not immediately repeat the offence, he accepted the dangerous glass whenever offered, and secretly rec-

konod on it. One evening, Richard said lightly, "I'm sure David could play as well as any on us, he's watched us so long." David said maybe he might, but when offered to take a hand, he turned shy, and, on being pressed, said he could not afford it.

"Then you spend your money in sweet things on the sly, as many a boy does," said the butler, sarcastically, "for we know you don't spend it on anything else."

David denied it, but being met with irony and open disbelief, the silly youth (who did not like being called a boy), showed them the little tin box. When they saw its contents, they gave him no peace till he consented to play with them; and when he said, "But it's for my mother," they answered, "Pooh! maybe you'll double her money."

So here was David, a good deal worsened in eighteen months, by his experience of the manners and customs of fashionable life. He did win once or twice, and thus the taste for play was formed and strengthened. But at what a stake! A soul for sixpence! Now, on the evening in question, while Lord Harry and the Beauforts were as merry as could be upstairs, these three men, and the lad so critically placed, were playing cards, perhaps not quite so well, but as much to their mind. By and by refreshments and chat ensued. Sorel ran over the small talk of the day, and carelessly said he supposed Mr. Richard had no prospect of change for the summer.

Mr. Richard's dignity being touched, he replied that his people were going to travel, but that nothing was talked of as yet.

"Harrogate, may be," Sorel suggested.

Richard laughed off the idea with contempt.

"Or Brighthelmstone? — or Ramsgate?"

Oh, dear, no. Overseas. Perhaps to kiss the Pope's toe. Very likely a matter of two or three years. But nothing was talked about yet.

Sorel had heard quite enough for the present—enough to pay out Lord Harry for suspecting him of tampering with his letter. And though Sorel was not a malignant, scarcely an ill-natured, man, yet, as he had no religious principle to speak of—*except* to speak of in a place where it never *was* spoken of or exacted, he did not see why he should resist the satisfaction of giving his lord and master a sleepless night. So, when Lord Harry was being

undressed, supremely complacent, Sorel took unfair advantage of his position to sap and undermine the foundations of his contentment in the quietest way possible.

“Your composing draught, my lord?”

“I almost think, Sorel, I shall be sure to sleep without it: my nerves are blessedly quiet to-night. We should not resort unnecessarily to sedatives—it weakens their effect. You may leave it beside me, however; and then, if I find myself restless, I can take it without troubling you, my good fellow.”

“Thank you, my lord.”

Sorel wavered for a moment, and then said—

“The Miss Beauforts have the prospect of charming weather for their journey—their travels, I should say.”

“Journey! travels!” repeated Lord

Harry, starting as if he had been stung.

“What are you dreaming of?”

“I beg a thousand pardons, my lord, if I have blundered ; I concluded you knew all about it.”

“*It!* What?” rejoined Lord Harry, exasperated.

“The journey—the tour, my lord.”

“I believe you mean to drive me into a fever, Sorel, by your incoherent talk. Say what you are driving at.”

“Did not your lordship know——”

“It is *my* province to catechize. Question your master, forsooth ! What next, I wonder ?”

“My lord, I humbly beg your pardon, and wish you good-night.”

“Stop on the instant. You don’t stir, sir ! Repeat me verbatim what nonsense has crept down the back-stairs.”

“My lord, I do assure you, on my sacred word, that it was neither more nor less than this. Mr. Richard was here, in attendance on the Captain and young ladies, and fell into general talk about the weather and so forth——”

“Skip all that.”

“And casually let fall that the family were about to travel this summer. It was news to me, and I slightly remarked, ‘To Harrogate, perhaps?’ He made a little gesture, like this, equivalent to saying no.”

“Don’t let your words be minute-guns.”

“On that, I ventured to suggest Bright-helmstone or Ramsgate. He gave a contemptuous smile at my being so wide of the mark, and said, ‘Oh, no, overseas—perhaps to kiss the Pope’s toe. Maybe for an absence of two or three years.’”

“Ha, ha! he was sporting with you,” broke in Lord Harry, with a discordant, unnatural laugh. “He was playing on your credulity, wanting to make himself of consequence by pretending a secret, garbling and misconstruing something his mean ears had picked up in the drawing-room: something that had quite another meaning. That rascal would get his discharge at short notice if——. That miscreant should get his ears cropped and his tongue slit if——. Pooh, pooh, pooh! If I thought you had been going to give me the rakings of such mere kitchen-stuff, I’d as soon have bidden you serve me with the picked chicken-bones, pea-haulms, and potato-peelings. Mind how you do so again; ’tis an insult, sir, and may cost you more than you think.”

“My lord, I am sensible the talk of any

one of Mr. Richard's stamp is quite beneath your lordship's notice; and I only repeated it in obedience to orders. I give you my faithful word——"

"Fie on your faithful word! you twist, and garble, and mistake——"

"I, my lord?"

"The whole batch of you. I don't mean you personally, of course. But a pack of idle dogs can't find better employment for their leisure hours than repeating to each other the mangled scraps of what they have picked up surreptitiously at their master's tables, which are recklessly spread in a widening radius by one and another, disseminated like contagious fever—garbage breeds fever—subtly influencing one after another, no one knowing how they came by it, whence it sprang, who carried it, any more than they know

whence the cur got the bone that he gnaws in the gutter. And so misunderstandings arise, heats are engendered, coolnesses succeed, families are set at variance, friends sundered, the happiness of a life-time forfeited. Shameful! shameful! Sorel, one of these days, for every idle word you'll be called to judgment."

"Heaven forbid, my lord!"

"You *will*—it's Bible truth. And better you'd be employed reading the Bible now and then, than killing time with slander and calumny."

"Mrs. Hannah More reads the Bible to her servants, I know," said Sorel, slightly smiling.

"Mrs. Hannah More is an excellent woman—a genius, sirrah, and I won't have her sneered at."

"I'm sure if your lordship wishes me

to read the Bible: I was under the impression your lordship didn't like to see it in our hands. There's Mr. James, I know, Mrs. Boscawen's coachman, reads 'The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod' on his coach-box."

Lord Harry could not help laughing.

"There are times and seasons for all things," said he, "and you know it as well as I do. I hate nothing so much as hypocrisy. If you won't read your Bible (which is excellent reading for the lower classes) there are plenty of other books. I'm sure I throw you a store of pamphlets. A game of cards, forfeits, *anything* but gossip. You're going without giving me my night draught. Where's your head?"

Poor Lord Harry took his anodyne, but it did not allay the shock of having been deceived by those he loved best.

CHAPTER XI.

PARTING AND STARTING.

" Vain, ~~very~~ vain, to find
That bliss which only centres in the mind."
GOLDSMITH'S *Traveller*.

SOREL had murdered sleep; and did ~~he~~ find a bed of roses? Apparently not; but ~~we~~ are not going to examine the thorns in his couch. Sharp little ones, too; but then his skin was somewhat obtuse, whereas Lord Harry's festered at the slightest scratch. He was captious, wayward, habitually selfish, though courteous to all but his unlucky valet, whom ~~he~~ yet could be kind and generous to at times and seasons.

And he committed the common mistake of supposing that occasional generousities could win perennial devotedness. We ask too much in this.

Mary was startled, shocked, and ashamed, when she received next morning an accusatory note from Lord Harry, which had nothing unkind or exaggerated in it. "He has found us out!" said she, looking full at her sister.

"No!" said Laura, rather guiltily; and then beginning to laugh.

"It is not a thing to laugh at," said Mary. "He is wounded at what he calls duplicity unworthy of high minds."

"Well, I suppose it *was* duplicity—*duplicis*—doubleness of heart or tongue."

"You take a derogatory accusation very composedly."

"Where's the good of being discom-

posed?" said Laura. "We didn't tell stories. We merely left something relating to our private affairs untold. Where was the need of telling? We did not tell him what we had for dinner; but was that duplicity?"

"No, but—oh, there are some things we know very well to be right or wrong, and I feel we were not open in this."

"But needed we to be open?" persisted Laura.

"To such a special friend, yes."

"Then you should have told him at first. It was you who were against telling."

"I think it was you."

"Oh, pardon me, sister."

"Well, I must write to him; and I confess I don't relish the task."

"I'm glad the task is not mine."

"Yes, you generally like to escape whatever is disagreeable."

"But you really brought this on yourself," said Laura, laughing. "I can't see the good of writing notes when a message would do as well."

"You know how people prize his notes."

"And how he prizes yours. You like saying pretty things to each other, and clever things that you know will be appreciated. I don't pity you a bit."

"I know you don't," said Mary, setting about her task. "I must work myself up to a note of effusion." After a little thought, she wrote it off, and then held it to Laura, saying, "There, I think that may do."

"Excellently," said Laura, after running through it. "Such charming contrition

will place you higher in his opinion than ever."

"But not make him readier to let us go, though."

"Need you have said this about economy?"

"It's quite true."

"And we're going to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth, henceforth and for ever?"

"Yes," said Mary, "I think it will be a very good plan. It will strengthen and purify our characters; place us on a higher platform——"

"I always follow your lead; so, directly I see you deviating the least bit from the rigidly straight line——"

"Nonsense, watch yourself not me."

"Both, if either," persisted Laura, merrily. "And now, the note is written

and the sermon preached. Does he say how he heard it ? ”

“ Through servants. ”

“ That Sorel is deep—deep as the deep sea. ”

“ Sorel must have heard it from Richard, of course. ” And Richard, just then obeying the summons to carry the note, was met by the grave looks of two pair of beautiful eyes, and only feeling guilty in general, not guilty in any recent particular, felt mystified and confounded, and was glad to withdraw.

“ He looked like a culprit, did not he ? ” said Laura.

“ Yes, but it is no use scolding him ; we must take him with us. ”

“ Why ? ”

“ How can you ask ? Papa must have a man. ”

“ But he need not have one who knows all our antecedents.”

“ Oh, that has its advantages as well as disadvantages. Our name does not carry such weight with it as to procure us much foreign consideration, except in virtue of our connections. And Richard knows them well enough. We shall be ranked among the *petite noblesse*.”

“ Richard doesn't know a word of anything but English.”

“ That may be an advantage too, sometimes. He cannot get too thick with strangers. And he knows papa's ways, and would be very valuable in case of papa's being ill.”

“ Mary, don't talk of illness—we are going to enjoy ourselves. Already I fancy myself being presented alla Sua Eccellenza Serenissima So-and-so, and being led to the

dance by Sua Altezza il Principe Somebody-or-other—Prince of Partners and so forth—let us practise our steps !” And whirling Mary into the middle of the room, she made her dance, whether she would or no, and Mary laughed and yielded for a little while, with all the grace imaginable. She had dropped into an easy-chair, and was cooling herself with a large green fan, when Richard entered with another note for her.

“What now ?” said Laura curiously, as soon as he had disappeared. “Won’t he be appeased ?”

“He is the kindest of the kind,” said Mary. “He says the more he knows us, the more virtues he discovers in——”

“Us ?”

“In both :—that it is worth while to catch me in a little fault now and then, for the pleasure of witnessing my pretty con-

trition. He says, if ever he discovers a real fault in either of us we may depend on hearing of it. That we came too perfect into his hands for his ever spoiling us by indulgence."

" 'You' is singular, not plural in *that* sentence, I know!" said Laura, peeping over her shoulder.

"Take it so if you will, I don't mind."

"No, no, I'll have my share. I like his praise. But you know it's sheer flattery."

"Approval——"

"Stuff."

"Admiration."

"He says 'All the world admires you, and yet you have contracted no vanity.' What is that, I should like to know, but flattery?"

"*He* would say, only the bare truth,"

said Mary. "However, flattery it is, of course, like the thousand pretty things that we hear with indifference every day. The reason his pretty things have a certain value belonging to those of no other, is that they have a degree of sincerity. He believes what he says, though it is not by any means true."

"Or you believe that he believes, at all events. Well, I'm glad that he is placable. We all like him very much, and it would be very uncomfortable to go away out of favour, after a cold parting. It would spoil the zest of our first start."

"Certainly; and see how well he takes what you thought I had better have suppressed, about money matters. 'Can I desire you to derange a reasonable plan of economy that would put you quite at ease on your return? Have I any pretensions

for expecting any such sacrifice? I would positively reject it. No, no, my angels, go and be happy, and I will be happy—happy in the thoughts of you, and in reading your letters.’”

“That is very nice of dear Lord Harry! What a pity he is so old.”

“On the contrary, I am glad he is old. A young man could not feel, could not write, as he does. And his age makes our friendship so safe. None but old wretches like Hecate and Hecuba (I am now convinced) could misinterpret it.”

“I am glad you think so at length,” said Laura. “You will be at peace. What a joke it would be, Mary, if we both returned to England, married women!”

“Don’t talk idly. I should be very glad to see you well married, and should very contentedly jog on with papa.”

"Oh, that will never be. You'll marry first."

"That's as may be. Marriages are made in heaven. It seems to me one of the senseless practices of daily life, to be always matrimony-hunting, instead of enjoying the present moment. *I mean to do so, I assure you. I mean to observe everything worth seeing, to write down facts and observations; to generalize my observations and deduce reflections.*"

"And put them into your letters to Lord Harry?"

"No, my journal; but he shall have the cream. It is what travellers owe to stayers-at-home. I fancy myself in a large, cool, pleasant room, without carpet or matting on the marble floor, but with great, green Venetian blinds, and a draperied recess for my bed, a little writing-table with a vase of flowers—"

“If that is all you expect of Italian life, your imagination is very poor, Mary. I expect magnificent scenery, splendid palaces, romantic castles, moonlight serenades, galleries of rich art treasures, and, in short, everything that is captivating.”

“I shall enjoy all that too,” said Mary. “Come, let us go and shake hands with Lord Harry. He has travelled a great deal, and, if we can get him to sympathize with us, will give us a variety of useful counsel and information.”

And so he did, and found his own happiness in doing so. Never was Lord Harry more amiable and agreeable than when, leaving himself and his hobbies and his ailments out of the question, he threw himself, as he sometimes did, completely into the interests and feelings of his friends. Then, his wit, his wisdom, his knowledge,

his experience, all came into play ; and he showed himself what he was, a really superior man.

Captain Beaufort, who looked comically dismayed when his daughters told him their secret was found out, laughed and rubbed his hands directly he heard Lord Harry was pacified, and protested he was monstrously glad to be relieved from having to break it to him, and to have escaped bolting it out by chance, as he had been a dozen times on the verge of doing already. The girls felt all the easier for no longer having a concealment ; and, aware they should be very much missed by one who had been a very kind friend to them, they made up for it as much as they could, to the last, by redoubling their affectionate attentions, devoting to him every moment they could spare, courting his counsels on every point,

and promising to bear him constantly in mind, and be the most punctual of correspondents. Laura rather hedged out of this last, but Lord Harry gaily smiled and said, "Manage it between you ; I care not whether Helena or Hermia fill the sheet, provided it *is* filled, but a full one I exact and won't bate a jot of."

"What ; when we have nothing to put into it, my lord ?"

"Yes, yes ; words will come directly you set pen to paper ; and you cannot write amiss. Don't write of obelisks and church steeples, but of thoughts and feelings. Dedicate rainy days to me : observe characters, keep a running commentary on passing events, and enrich your old friend with your passing experiences. Come back as good and blooming and engaging as you go. Don't give too many

honest men the heartache. God bless you, my dears." He took leave of them with the affection of a grandfather, and their faces assured him that their hearts were really touched.

When they vanished, they seemed to take all the sunlight with them. Lord Harry seized his cane, and, by its aid, hastily reached the window and looked after them. They had passed through the iron gate and were just disappearing, but they looked up and smiled. He waved his hands, watched them out of sight, and formed his thoughts into something more of prayer than was his wont. "Oh, keep them innocent, unspotted from the world; keep them from every evil; every danger. Bring them safely back to their country and to me." He was so much calmed and elevated by this remedy, that one might

wonder he did not resort to it oftener. But do we ?

They started with spirits as light as feathers, on the appointed morning, in a light travelling carriage Captain Beaufort had bought second-hand, a great bargain ; which it was, till it broke down ; a misdemeanour it committed several times afterward ; till the captain, having pitched on his head and shaken out a tooth in the last overthrow, sold it to a travelling English party, still "a great bargain," and observed to his daughters with glee that they had had several weeks' use of it for nothing.

"Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm," quoted Miss Flambeau rather inappropriately, after spending an hour in watching Richard scientifically pack the carriage, and the steady lady's-maid appear, disappear, and reappear with bandboxes

and dressing-cases. Finally the captain handed in his daughters and took his own place beside Mary; and Richard, having assisted Mrs. Danvers to mount on high, scrambled up beside her and looked around with smiling importance—much to the envy of David in the distance. Lookers-on often fancy travellers starting in a state of beatification that does not actually belong to them, but these, in their several ways, were really happy.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ENGLISH ABROAD.

"Impelled with steps unceasing, to pursue
Some fleeting good that mocks them with the view."

GOLDSMITH.

Was it owing to Lord Harry's valuable introductions, that the Beauforts were well-received wherever they went? More likely than not: he paved the way for them, and as soon as they were known, they were liked. Thus, without rank or wealth, they met with flattering attention. The only want was money, and the only person harassed by that want was Mary. Laura

unconcernedly remarked that it was not her province, and if Captain Beaufort's card-purse was emptied one evening, he reckoned, not without reason, on replenishing it the next. But this was hateful to Mary, who was always trying to keep him within bounds.

They have been well received at several foreign courts, have lived quietly from time to time, and are now on their way to Rome, having wound round the foot of Soracte, and left Civita Vecchia Castellana behind them. The declining sun throws purple gleams of his slanting rays, which light up the mediæval forms of the romantic city in their rear and the volcanic defiles around them. Captain Beaufort is asleep, Laura deep in a romance, and Mary still deeper in reverie. Suddenly a horseman galloped up to them, and Laura screamed. He gave

a quick, amused look into the carriage, and rode past, followed by a vetturino.

“What made you scream, Laura?” said Mary.

“I can’t think,” said Laura. “The story had excited me, I believe, and so I took him for a robber.”

“Robber! He was quite a gentleman, and a very handsome one too. He had *l’air noble*.”

“Was he not rather ferocious looking?”

“Oh, no! One of the most distinguished looking men I have seen in Italy. Probably travelling, like ourselves. I doubt his being a foreigner.”

“Perhaps not,” said Laura, absently.

“My dear Mary, this is an extraordinary story. Shall I read you some of it?”

“No, thank you—the creaking and jingling of the *calèche* would prevent my

hearing you with any pleasure, and I prefer thinking my own thoughts."

And so she dreamed on; and so did her father, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and now and then giving a jerk forward and then pulling himself up again, still in dreamland.

"Ah! visions less deceitful far
Than waking dreams by daylight are."

Arrived in Rome, they did as Rome does, but not as Romans do; for they trudged from post to pillar, from basilica to catacomb, like poor victims, as they were, to an arbitrary cicerone. Of course, St. Peter's was the prime object of interest. They traversed its superb court, admired its obelisk, its fountains, its colonnade, paced its long nave, and beheld with wondering admiration its marble pavements, painted cupolas, gilded panels, and splendid

mosaics ; but not being either cognoscenti or dilettanti, these marvels did not meet with the intelligent appreciation they would have received from Lord Harry. In fact, after repeating the same superlative exclamations again and again, and pronouncing rather indiscriminately the words "bellissima," "superbissima," and "stupendissima," the girls grew weary of looking upward, and gladly consented to take a downward view from the upper part of St. Peter's. Up and up they mounted, till at length they were ready to drop ; up and up yet higher, till they emerged on a platform commanding a wonderful *coup-d'œil*, which elicited renewed exclamations. At the sound of their English voices, two gentlemen turned about, and one of them joyously exclaimed, "Is it possible ? Do I see the Miss Beauforts ?"

“What a singular spot for a rencontre, Mr. Curzon!” cried Mary, laughing. Mutual felicitations ensued, in the midst of which Mr. Curzon presented to them his friend and fellow-traveller, Colonel Dalmayne. A smile of amused recognition passed between them.

“What!” said Mary, “have I the pleasure of seeing the gentleman who alarmed my sister so on the road yesterday?”

“Ah, I thought I frightened her,” said he, bowing to Laura, and laughing. “I could not imagine the nature of my offence. Surely she did not take me for a captain of banditti?”

“Something like it, I believe,” said Mary.

“I always told you, Dalmayne,” said Mr. Curzon, “that you wore too much

hair. You'll believe it, now that a lady has screamed at you."

"Oh, I was very foolish," said Laura. "I was reading an interesting story, and the sudden apparition of a horseman made me start."

"And scream! I so longed to ride back again and say—

'You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear,
And who, perchance, both quake and tremble here,
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner am—'

"But you're *not* Snug the joiner," interrupted Laura merrily, "any more than a captain of banditti."

"Well, no more I am," said he laughing; and forthwith they launched into a sea of nonsense; and afterwards compared their travelling experiences—where they had been, what they had seen, what inns they had found detestable, what galleries

and scenery had thrown them into ecstasies. After all this there was home news to discuss and English gossip; and time must have meanwhile flown on noiseless wings, for they spent four hours on the platform of St. Peter's.

It was something to remember all their lives! whatever might happen on their subsequent journeys, through Italy and through life. After such a beginning, it was not strange that they should, on the following day, visit the Capitol together. Ascending the tower, they seated themselves beneath the shade of its pinnacle, and contemplated the view beneath and around them. That view comprised ancient and modern Rome—the latter, extending over the Campus Martius and spreading along the Tiber; while the ruins of the ancient city, scattered over the seven hills in black, shapeless

masses, lay desolate, solitary and silent, under groups of funereal cypress.

No associations with the past ever damped Captain Beaufort's mirth; he could jest in a basilica, and pun in a catacomb. While he and Laura rattled away with some others of the party, Mary, Mr. Curzon, and Colonel Dalmayne carried on a quiet stream of conversation, enriched by many a memory of the past. The Colonel thought Miss Beaufort a most charming girl, and exerted his mind to lay his best stores at her feet. They met again in the evening at a concert. Afterward, late as it was, Mary, before retiring to rest, began a letter to Lord Harry, and her pen flew over the paper. She had been a bad correspondent of late, but now that her heart and mind were full of vivid impressions she longed to give them utterance. However,

she destroyed her letter the next morning, after reading it by daylight. Things assumed a more sober tone; her mind was in a different frame. "Men don't always hear one another's praises with unwounded ear," thought she, "even with—how many years between them? Lord Harry, all the world knows, is turned of seventy, Colonel Dalmayne cannot be above twenty-eight. Forty years and more between them!" Before tearing up the letter she read it through again. "It reads tolerably, there is life in it, I believe—he would enjoy the common sense; and the nonsense too. But no; why should I put my thoughts so much in anyone's power? He might say, 'Mary is *éprise*'—and laugh at me when we meet; which I could not bear. What a new colouring, of the most cheerful brightness, is suddenly cast over everything! To what

can I attribute it ? No matter ; it is harmless, even if transient. I will enjoy it while it lasts."

The next meeting, after an interval of a few days, was again by chance. The Beau-forts were on their way to the falls of Terni, when Curzon and Dalmayne came up with them ; and after a few cheerful greetings, passed onward. On reaching the little inn where they were to sleep, there were the two young men before them ! They had left them the best rooms, and secured inferior ones for themselves. Of course they all supped together ; and a very lively supper it was. What an infinity of things they talked of ! During a pause Laura took up a guitar, and striking a few chords, was surprised to hear them repeated a little way off. The next moment a singular and rather picturesque figure

made his appearance in the doorway, his guitar slung round his neck ; and after running over its strings with rapid and brilliant touch, he bowed with perfect self-possession to the company, and asked if they would like to hear him improvise.

“By all means.”

“Would their excellencies oblige him with a subject ?”

“Italy,” said one.

“Too easy,” objected another ; however, he caught at it, and burst into a passionate apostrophe to his beloved, unhappy country, the mother and nurse of all that was good, great, and beautiful, but crushed beneath the heel of strangers.

“The dog would really persuade us he knew what patriotism is,” observed Captain Beaufort in English.

"Hush, papa, he understands you," said Mary.

"Not he," said her father, composing his face, however.

"He understands the language of the eye, and the tone," said Mary. "I would not hurt his feelings on any account. Depend upon it, he has genuine love of his country, or how would he work himself up to such a spontaneous outburst for it?"

"How are we sure he does not keep such subjects ready cut and dried?" said Captain Beaufort. "How did Medea work herself up to such an outburst of jealousy last night? These people are born actors. They'll do anything for money. Bid him praise the Austrians, and see if he won't."

The improvisatore declined, however,

looking haughty and injured; and Laura thought he must be a hero in disguise, but the waiter, when questioned, spoke of him as an honest poor fellow, who had lived hard by all his life, and got a poor subsistence by hanging about the inn. They rewarded him with money and praise, and he seemed as much pleased with one as the other. After singing a short eulogy on the bounty of the gentlemen and the beauty of the ladies, he withdrew, bowing repeatedly.

Next morning, they started in calèches to see the falls, five miles from the town; and it was Colonel Dalmayne's privilege to escort Mary to the favourite point of view. Afterward they returned in their calèches as far as Papigno, and then went on foot to see the cascade from below. The walk was hot and rather fatiguing,

and they were glad to rest in the shade and enjoy the view of the waters, and the mountains scattered with villages and crowned by the ruins of an old castle.

Their guide, pulling out a little flute, began to play a simple air, that they might hear a remarkable echo. Colonel Dalmayne implored Mary to sing; at first without success. Laura was more easily persuaded, and Mary presently seconded her. Then they talked of the echo song in Comus, and Mary quoted the well-known passage about Sabrina; and Captain Beaufort idly asked who 'Whilome' was.

"Whilome? she was the daughter of Locrine," said Laura, laughing.

Meanwhile, the guide went on a foraging expedition, and returned with green figs and purple grapes, which, with draughts of water from the Velino, made

a rural feast. Mr. Curzon pronounced the group fit for Watteau.

"Why," inquired he, "did Addison select this scene as proper to engulf Alecto, and carry her to the infernal regions?"

"Such a simple question!" returned Mary. "Because fury and malice cannot so much as exist in such a spot. Let them but enter it, they perish."

"Can you fancy a greater earthly paradise?"

"No."

"Would you like to live here always?"

She shook her head. "I should be *ennuyée* to death. I am not sufficiently in love with rural pleasures."

"Just my case," said Colonel Dalmayne. "I must have society—cultivation, movement from place to place.

Books and scenery would never suffice me."

At length they were forced to recollect that they had two miles to walk back to the calèches. It was a fatiguing day's pleasure; but in after years, Mary and Laura remembered the agreeables, while the fatigue was forgotten.

The ladies were handed into their carriage; parting words and looks were exchanged; and the pleasant friends of a week were lost sight of for the remainder of their travels; their routes lay in opposite directions.

Mary, yielding to an intense nervous headache, leaned back in a corner of the calèche with closed eyes, and lived the last few hours over again; while Laura and her father talked incessantly.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT LORD HARRY SAID.

"The play! the play's the thing."

HAMLET.

THE showers of silver spray, groves of ilex, chestnut, olive-flower, enamelled paths, steep picturesque steps, and the firm hand upheld to support her down them; the sylvan feast, the enchanted echo, might well group together in a scene that was preserved to the end of Mary's life, for it formed its most romantic page.

They floated down the stream of existence, now idling in the shade, now toiling in the sun, now moving from one

storied city to another; shining at court, opera, ball; admired, fêted, forgotten; the favourites of an hour, to be succeeded by favourites equally fleeting; and, amid it all, there was a void to Mary: amid it all there was a disappointment to Laura; for the vague *summum bonum* remained unrealized: the old, sordid cares made themselves felt.

"Are you dedicating a rainy day to Lord Harry?" said Laura, when they had been living frugally in a grass-grown dead-alive old city, mossed with memories, nearly a fortnight.

"No; to myself," answered Mary, whose pen continued to fly over the paper.

"Elucidate. 'Let me not burst in ignorance.'"

"Don't you know we are getting short of money?"

"To be sure I do; but you said we had enough to carry us home."

"Yes, if papa will keep within bounds. Did you notice Lord Harry's post-script?"

"I could not make it out, it was such a scribble."

"He said 'holy Hannah got six hundred pounds for her tragedy.'"

"Ha, ha; excellent, certainly; a tragedy by a holy Hannah!"

"I'm not taking it in that way. My dear Laura, only think! Six hundred pounds—what a nice sum!"

"I think so indeed. I only wish you or I could net it."

"Well—I'm trying."

"You don't say so!" cried Laura, joyously.

"I do say so, but I don't say I shall

succeed, either in earning the money or writing the play."

"Why should not you?" cried Laura, who did not at all like losing sight of the brilliant prospect.

"Because I'm not clever enough, I'm afraid," said Mary, sighing.

"I think you very clever," said Laura, "and so does papa, so does Lord Harry—everybody thinks so. Dear me, I'm sure you'll succeed, if you do but try. What a quantity you have written already! nearly enough, have you not?"

"Oh no, not nearly!"

"Do let me read what you have written?"

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes; '*Dramatis Personæ*'—I declare that looks quite the right thing; 'Rosalvina.' What a lovely name, Mary!"

"Yes, I think the names are not bad."

" 'Act 1: Scene 1. A Palace Garden by Moonlight'—Why, this is charming—"

"You silly girl," said Mary, laughing a little, and trying to take the manuscript from her, "you have not come to the real difficulties yet."

"All in good time; it opens well at any rate: I want to go on with it. 'Enter Rolando.' What has he to say for himself, I wonder?"

Laura carried off her prize to a fauteuil, established herself comfortably, and read with avidity; while Mary, not displeased at her doing so, idly played with her pen and indulged in golden dreams of success.

"How far have you read?"

"To where Antonio comes in."

"What do you think of it?"

"I can't tell yet."

"I know it's rather poor," said Mary, after a pause.

"The beginning is a little flat," said Laura.

"Ah! Here, give it me!"

"No, no, Rosalvina is just coming in. She's nice."

This again encouraged Mary, and she sat, pleasantly musing, till Laura said—

"What a pity there's no more! Do go on!"

"You like it, then?"

"Yes, I think it very pretty."

"What strikes you most?"

"The dialogue between Rolando and Rosalvina. It is excellent, I think."

"I thought it was rather good."

"I call her last speech affecting. Do go on with it."

"Well, I think I will. You are very

encouraging. What will the critics say, I wonder?"

"What will Lord Harry say?"

"Don't name him. He frightens me."

"I am sure he would think anything super-excellent that was done by you."

"On the contrary, I fear his regard for me would render him dissatisfied with what was very well in its way, if it were not super-excellent."

"Let us hope that it will be, then," said Laura. "Nay, I am persuaded that it will."

Fired by this praise, Mary took up her pen with renewed energy, and wrote till she was quite tired. Laura then insisted on her going into the open air. She pursued her task day by day till it was nearly finished. In the evening Laura exclaimed—

"Papa, what do you think? Mary is writing a play!"

"Be quiet, Laura," said Mary.

"A play, of all things in the world!" cried Captain Beaufort. "The very last thing I should have thought of."

"What would have been the first?" said Mary, smiling.

"Why, a sermon, an essay, a——oh, anything but a comedy."

"Mine is a tragedy."

"A tragedy, by all that's diverting! Here, let me look at it."

"No, no, papa."

"But I say, yes."

"That's right, papa," said Laura, laughing. "I know you will say she has done it very well."

"People don't like their tragedies to be laughed at," said Mary, still holding back.

"Of course not. I was laughing at the surprise, not at the tragedy. Come, out with it, and don't take so much pressing."

Slowly and half-reluctantly Mary produced her manuscript; and yet, so possessed was she by the natural affection which one has for the coinage of one's own brain, that she felt persuaded her father would be pleased with it, especially as he was by no means so fastidious as Lord Harry. To beguile suspense, while waiting for his opinion, she took up her knotting. What was her dismay when the silence was broken by a loud—

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Don't you like it, papa?" cried Laura, starting up.

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"I knew how it would be—give it me,"

said Mary, crimsoning, and trying to take it from him, but he held it aloft.

“Ho, ho, ho!”

“Papa, you are really too bad,” said Mary. “Do you think I’ve no feelings?”

“Oh, I’m so affected!”

“No, you are not, papa; you’re a very bad man. You are tiresome, abominable——”

“Yes, you really are, papa,” chimed in Laura, “when poor Mary has written so nicely, and hoped to get six hundred pounds——”

“Six hundred pounds?” repeated he, growing grave in a minute.

“Yes; Lord Harry says Hannah More made six hundred pounds by her tragedy; and why should not Mary?”

“That question is Laura’s,” said Mary.

"Did Lord Harry say so?" asked Captain Beaufort.

"Yes, papa, he did; he said Mrs. Hannah More cleared six hundred pounds."

"Lord Harry should know," said Captain Beaufort, "for he's well up in these things; but, faith, I never could have supposed . . . Six hundred pounds? Ho, ho, ho!"

"If *I* get six hundred pounds, papa, shall you say 'ho, ho, ho'?"

"If *you* . . . ? The idea! No, indeed. Ho, ho, ho! I beg your pardon, Mary——"

"I think you ought," said Mary, laughing. "You have not the smallest compassion for an author's feelings."

"Because he can't understand them," said Laura. "Never mind, Mary."

"Ah, *you* are the critic for me," said Mary. "But, papa, don't run away with half an idea, or a wrong one. Because Mrs. More got six hundred pounds, it by no means follows that I can."

"No, indeed, my good girl. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nor even one hundred."

"One hundred? That is a great come down," said Laura. "But even one hundred would be very well."

"Yes, I believe you," said Captain Beaufort, with his hands in his pockets. "I wish I had the yellow boys here at this instant."

"So write, write, Mary," pleaded Laura, "and if you succeed——"

"But an' if I fail?" said Mary.

"*You* fail?" cried Laura. "I am sure you will not, if you try your best."

"What, when papa laughs?"

"Never mind my laughing, my dear," said her father, "I can't help it. I was born laughing, I dare say. It's the nature of me, whether at anything or nothing. If it were a comedy, now, I could not pay you a higher compliment."

"Only, as it's a tragedy——"

"'Pon my soul, I think the best thing you could do with it would be to turn it into a comedy."

"Papa! papa!"

"'Pon my honour, I do. It's half a comedy already (ho, ho, ho!)—and all you've to do is to alter the plot a little."

"Mary, papa's idea is not so bad as you think—a *comédie larmoyante*, you know. I assure you, I like Rosalvina so much, that I shall be quite sorry if you kill her. Make

her as wretched as you like first of all, and let all end happily at last."

"Yes, that will be ten thousand times better," said Captain Beaufort; "and then you can put in an Irishman, and a lying valet, and a smart waiting-maid, to lighten the heavy parts."

"An Irishman in Italy?" said Mary, ruefully.

"Yes, that will tell well. Quite a new notion, that you'll thank me for afterwards."

"That will never do. I had better give the thing up."

"Give up six hundred pounds?" cried Captain Beaufort—"six hundred, or even one? My dear child, if you have a chance of making it, you owe it to your family."

"One pound?"


"One hundred, you know I meant.

Pluck up your courage, Mary! At it with a will! I expect it to be the success of the season."

Poor Mary was greatly perplexed and troubled. Here were her family urging her forward, at the very hint of money-making, and interfering with her plans, and suggesting alterations that she was sure were inexpedient. The pure pleasure of composition, flowing at its own sweet will, was gone. And yet, here was Laura, urging and encouraging and prompting, and her father actually counting on the spoils (on the principle "what's yours is mine, and what's mine is my own"), so that she felt she must do her best, with whatever success. The *comédie larmoyante* plan was adopted, with modifications of her father's proposed additions; and as she warmed with her work, she could not help

telling Lord Harry what she was about, and ingenuously confessing her hopes and fears. Before his answer could reach her the play was finished ; and, aided by the best reading imaginable, it enraptured Laura, who laughed, clapped, and praised to her heart's content. Mary would have preferred reading it to her father, but he was at his casino, and, returning late, begged he might read it to himself after the girls were gone to bed.

Next morning, he was even later than usual at breakfast ; and joining them at last, he threw the manuscript on the table, and said, complacently, "There's your play, Mary. I've done what I could for you ; it would never have done as it was. You owe me some thanks, my dear girl, for I sat up at it till four o'clock this morning, and was at it again in bed when



the clock struck eight, and sprinkled the bedclothes famously with ink."

"What alterations have you made?" said Mary, with beating heart, as she took up her sadly-defaced manuscript.

"Easier to ask than to answer," was Captain Beaufort's reply, eating and talking at the same time. "In the first place, you know, there was no swearing."

"Oh, papa! you would never have a lady swear?"

"Roselvina? no, of course"—(Laura burst out laughing) "only the men. They must not talk like women, you know."

Poor Mary turned over the pages in distress.

"And when they went out to fight, you were quite on the wrong tack. Men never go on like that. Their heads are fuller of the matter in hand. And the valet was

tame. The gallery would hiss him. Rosalvina's soliloquies were too long. They required curtailment for the stage."

"I wish, papa, you had written the play yourself."

"That's just the thing I cannot do," said he, with entire self-complacency. "I can add, expunge, and touch up to any amount; everything but invent. Had I been gifted with invention, the managers should have paid a pretty penny for it."

"What a good thing Mary has invention," said Laura.

"Yes, famous," said Captain Beaufort. "Because, you see, what she wants, I have, and what I want, she has; so that, between us, we have the perfect making of a playwright — like Beaumont and Fletcher."

Who shall express Mary's chagrin?



She was convinced her play was spoilt; and, even if it were not, here was her father taking his share of the merit, and making additions to which she would not at all like to set her name. To say nothing of his evidently counting on half, if not all, the proceeds; which Mary was too high-minded to make a grievance of. To conceal the mortification and crossness she could not help feeling, she left the room, taking with her the ill-fated manuscript; and locked it up, after a very cursory examination, which she had not the heart to pursue. She saw her father go down the street, and then she rejoined Laura, who could not help noticing her vexed face.

“Mary, here’s a letter for you from Lord Harry,” said she. “I was just going to bring it to you. Never mind about the play: what does it signify?”

"Easy for you to say," said Mary.

"Of course, it will be a serious thing to lose six hundred pounds——"

"How can we lose what we have never had? The six hundred pounds is nonsense. I wish Lord Harry had never named it."

"But one hundred——" said Laura.

"Nonsense. I don't care about money. I would much rather my play should succeed."

"*Not* care about money? Why, I thought that was the very thing you wrote for."

"At first; but I became interested in my work, and identified myself with it. I cannot do so now."

"Papa will give you all the credit. It will be sure to succeed, now he has touched it up."

"I don't think so. Let me read my letter in peace."

Lord Harry was all on the *qui vivo*—full of expectation and apprehension. He rated Mary's abilities so highly that she could not but be gratified at his estimate of them; but he told her he trembled for her success in such a path: it was full of dangers she knew not of—she was like Queen Emma walking blindfold among burning ploughshares.

"Let me, I beseech you," he wrote, "see what you have written before it meets any other eye. I tremble for your success; and even success may be too dearly purchased. Why should you, my Mary, enter on the thorny ways of literature? It is very well for Mrs. More, who has had her living to get; but you, my princess, have no need to 'waste the hours

that might be better spent,' in writing for the stage. I am the last who should despise literature *per se*, for it has cheered many solitary and otherwise melancholy hours; but that was for itself, not for the vulgar guerdon, to secure which one must bend one's taste to that of others, and write, not what the wise will approve, but what the vulgar will applaud.

"But Queen Emma issued scatheless from the ordeal, and so, my Mary, may you. Nay, your exquisite intuition assures me of it. But indulge me with a transcript of what you have done, as soon as possible. I am dying to see it."

"I wish I might send it to him just as it was first written," said Mary; "but I have no heart to copy papa's alterations. Copy it for me, Laura, for I am sick of it."

"With all my heart," said Laura,

cheerfully. "I shall enjoy having something to do with it; and you know my hand closely resembles yours."

"You write better than I do."

"No; mine is the neatest, but not so free."

She made a beautiful transcript, which justly pleased Mary, who, hastily running through it, found her favourite passages embellished by their new dress, and fancied the interpolations less objectionable than in truth they were. And thus she forwarded the manuscript to Lord Harry with some trepidation, but with fond self-assurance of his admiration and surprise at her work. And what said the letter that reached her in return with the least possible delay?

"My Mary, is it possible you can be so coarse? No, I am sure you cannot be.

I am positive that the original has been garbled, for all the artifice of Laura's fair copy. You cannot, my dear girl, have written scene the second, act the third, as it stands—I should not admire and respect you as I do if I thought it. The style betrays itself; it has nothing of your light touch; its only lightness is of morality. I have not been accounted one of the too precise myself, nor should I say anything censorious of this as the production of your father; but as that of a young lady in whose welfare and reputation I am deeply concerned, I could wish it had never been written! Still, since you avow the hope that it may meet with public approval, I have put it in the right channel—but have withheld the name of the author, or authors, for I could swear there are two. And, for your sake, I was going

to say, I wish it success: but, no! I do not, when I think of the drawbacks."

"Rightly served," ejaculated Mary; "the censure is deserved, though it does not fall quite where it ought. Can I wish for success now? No, since so good a judge condemns. Rather do I wish my work buried in oblivion."

She was on tenter-hooks till the public verdict was pronounced. Thanks to Lord Harry, the play was brought out with every advantage; but it did not reach the third night. To Captain Beaufort's chagrin, it did not bring the family six hundred pounds, or even "one."

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHALLENGE.

The gentleman will, for his honour's sake, have one
bout with you.

SHAKESPEARE.

FROM Italy to a London counting-house is a great transition; though the atmosphere of our great metropolis is not to be supposed so smoky in the last century as it is now. Even in the heart of the City, on a fine summer morning, there was a glimpse of bright blue sky overhead; and one side of the way was pleasantly in the shade and the other in the sun, as Tom Bellarmine took his way to Mr. Oldworth's house of

business. Turning from a narrow lane, full of carts and waggons, into a quiet paved court, and thence through an open doorway, he entered the clerks' offices, and passed into the inner room, where his friend was writing.

"Joe! how do you do?"

"Ha, Tom! how are you? You make sunshine in a shady place," said Mr. Oldworth, shaking his hand heartily.

"Shade is no bad thing, this warm morning," said Bellarmine, throwing himself into a chair. "How cool and quiet you are here! with mignonette redolent of the country in your window."

"I find a whiff off it puts me in good temper."

"Puts you? Why, you're never out of it! You leave ill humours to poor wretches like myself."

“What propitious gale has wafted you here this morning?”

“A blow rather than a breeze. I had a little matter to talk over with you—but you’re busy.”

“Business can wait,” said Mr. Oldworth, pushing aside his papers, and turning his chair about to face his friend. “I’m never too busy to be interested in your affairs, whatever they may be. What is it?”

“Well, I’m rather in a pickle just now——”

“In want of money? You great scholars often are. You know you may command me.”

“No, no—thanks, thanks—nothing of the sort. I wish it *were* only a matter of money, though money is the root of all evil. I don’t know but what I must fight a man.”

“Fight!” ejaculated Mr. Oldworth.

"Don't look so enormously scared," said Bellarmine, beginning to laugh.

"Did you say 'fight'?"

"Fight was the word. And I don't want fight to be the action; nor yet to be called a poltroon."

"Surely not; but—dear, dear! What can you have done? How have you been drawn into it? What has become of your convictions? How have you lost sight of your calling?"

"Easy questions to ask, Joe, and they will not take long to answer. A titled fellow was uncivil to Miss Pomeroy. I stepped forward to teach him manners. In his insolence, he struck me. Even in my righteous wrath, I would not hit him again. O dear me, no! But I—— Here, just stand up and I'll show you how I pinned him."

"I don't know that I shall like it," said Mr. Oldworth, laughing.

"But absolutely you must, or I shall stick in my story as Sancho Panza did in his, about the sheep going over the river."

"What sheep?" still laughing.

"Nonsense, you know well enough—I'll tell you another time, if you've forgotten. Come, stand up, sir——"

"This way?"

"No, not that way. One would think you were Punch, dodging the hangman. Come now, put a little spirit into it, Joe, as you used to do at school, when you saw a big boy bullying a little one! There you are, sir! You can't call that hurting you, you villain! And that's all I did to my adversary."

"All? and enough too, with your Herculean grasp and flaming eye."

“I cowed him, I promise you ! I cowed him. The abject worm wriggled all over, and, directly I let him go, turned upon me, according to the manners and customs of worms, and whispered, ‘I shall expect satisfaction to-morrow.’ I gave him a look.”

“And quite enough to give him, considering what a look it was likely to be. Satisfaction, indeed ! It was you who had a right to satisfaction.”

“To be sure it was : but I could not stand wrangling there, with Miss Pomeroy hanging on my arm ; and the worst of it is, I fear the look lost its withering effect, because the lights flickered so, and he was just turning on his heel.”

“If that’s the worst of it, all’s well that ends well.”

“Not so—at least, this has not ended

yet, for this morning I have had a challenge, villanously penned."

"My dear Tom, a man that would take advantage of your cloth deserves nothing but contempt. Oblige me with his note."

"There it is, with my answer. I wanted the benefit of your cooler head before I sent it."

Mr. Oldworth read it rapidly, with concentrated attention.

"This is excellent," said he, as he returned it. "So terse, original, and taking such high ground. If the offender deserved notice at all, this is just the answer to give him."

"You don't think it pusillanimous?"

"Most certainly not. It is the letter of a man of spirit and a Christian."

"The fact is, I don't feel a bit like a

Christian towards him at this present, but should like to spit him like a lark, if I listened to the natural man; but what would Miss Pomeroy say?"

"And what would your conscience say? Grant me a little request. Let me be the bearer of this letter."

"*You?*"

"Yes. I'll be your second; such a second as you want—and as you deserve. Tom! you may leave your honour in my hands."

"Really, Joe, this is wonderfully well thought of—I don't like taking advantage of it."

"Pooh, pooh!"

"I should burn to trounce him, if it were not for my cloth——"

"But, as it is, we must avoid such a scandal."

“Say again, you don’t think me a poltroon——”

“How long have I known you? You are as brave as a lion. Meet me here in a couple of hours, and I’ll tell you what has passed.”

Bellarmino wrung his hand, and Mr. Oldworth hastened on his benevolent errand.

Before the time appointed, he returned and found Bellarmino awaiting him in gloomy thought, with his chin resting on his hands.

“All’s right,” said he, gladly.

“Heaven be praised!” cried Bellarmino..

“What did he say?”

“What could he say? He said very little, after an ineffectual bluster. I brought him, at length, to an apology——”

“You did?”

"Read it for yourself; there it is in writing; and after his writing it, I conceded so much as civilly to shake hands with him and wish him good day."

"Joe, I'm immensely obliged to you. You can't think how much——"

"Oh, yes, I can. You would have done just the same for me, had our positions been reversed."

The idea of their positions being reversed appeared irresistibly ludicrous to Bellarmine; he laughed the laugh of a relieved mind. "What a load you have taken off me," said he. "It is incomprehensible to me how you could get the worm to write."

"Well, you see, if he had been *quite* a worm, he would not. I proceeded on that assumption."

You first-class fellow——"


“No, Tom, it’s *you* who are first-class, double first. I never came in for university honours.”

“Because you never tried for them. You would have had them, Joe, had you ever been at college.”

And so the friends parted; Bellarmine’s heart swelling with feelings he could not utter; and Mr. Oldworth tasting of emotions that were sufficient reward.

Tom went straight to Miss Pomeroy and told her all about it. According to the foolish and sinful customs of that day, men were continually outraging good manners and feelings, and then one or other of them whipping out his sword, which came too handy, claimed “the satisfaction of a gentleman”—just as if a gentleman had not a right to a better satisfaction than that. Hence Miss Pomeroy knew very well

that a challenge would be the natural sequence of what had passed ; and was in painful anxiety till Tom made his appearance alive and well. The light that shot into her eye and the flutter of pleasure with which she received him, plainly told what her apprehensions had been ; and when, after a few short sentences, they found themselves impelled to the subject, Tom's native frankness made him tell her all from beginning to end, though he had had some thoughts of not letting her hear a word about it. He eulogized Mr. Oldworth in the warmest terms, saying nothing could surpass his spirit, his self-possession, his intuitive knowledge of the best course to pursue, and his readiness to do anything consistent with rectitude for a friend. Tom was positive that, owing to his possession of these qualities, he had prevented him




from being made to fight against his will, and probably either meeting a violent end himself in a frame unbecoming a Christian, or having the blood of a fellow-creature on his soul.

"I do believe," said Miss Pomeroy, when they afterwards talked the matter over quietly, "that duelling is the most senseless custom that ever was adopted. It seldom awards the severest penalty on the offending party, and is certain to inflict disproportionate and undeserved suffering on the innocent. I look on it as no proof of courage. True courage is shown in being able to bear the world's laugh for refusing to be the slave of its sinful customs."

Mr. Oldworth certainly thought that Bellarmine would keep the challenge to himself; but the next time he saw Miss

Pomefroy, her eloquent look told him, as plainly as words, that she knew all about it.

His own course lay among shoals and quicksands. There was some unexpected turn of affairs in the mercantile world, which threatened to impoverish him; and while this danger impended, he was much confined to his counting-house. When he next visited Chiswick, he found he had lost ground. His handsome cousin had taken advantage of his absence; and Mr. Tolhurst no longer looked on him as "a warm man," but one whose fortune was in jeopardy, and who might turn out a penniless fellow. Mr. Oldworth bore this without any resentment, though wounded keenly; he would not advance any pretensions to an amiable girl, while uncertain of being able to offer her a suitable home—



he would sooner be silent to his grave. This self-control was easier to maintain, because he had a modest hope that he was the preferred aspirant. Trifles light as a straw, a feather, a bubble, sometimes tell us which way the wind blows; and his hopes were just kept alive, by Lucy's accepting his hand instead of Levitt's, in stepping into a boat. It was a trifling preference enough, and might even proceed from too conscious a feeling toward his cousin; but during the little excursion to Richmond, while Levitt rattled, complimented, and bragged, Mr. Oldworth's feelings were in happy tune. He could laugh at shallow jokes, return raillery for raillery, and good-humouredly overlook some rather impolite hits; but he certainly wished Hal would not exaggerate quite so much.

To all Hal's balderdash, however, did Mr. Tolhurst seriously incline. He was not a very wise old man, nor had he any experience out of business. He was out of business now, and was tired of it—tired of his vacuity, and in want of amusement, not of a very high kind. Levitt just supplied his requirements, and made him think he would be a first-rate companion for the evening of life. "Whereas Joe is but a poor fellow, after all, has never been abroad, and knows little of life. A worthy fellow, but dull, very dull. Smiles, but seldom laughs. Levitt's laugh goes nigh to split the ceiling. Levitt praises his food—Oldworth scarce knows what he eats. Always at his book or his books; and maybe if he were not so bookish, his ledger would show a better sum-total. Levitt knows a heap of good company—would

take his wife into famous society ; I don't believe Joe would take her anywhere. So that, as I've netted quite enough for me and Lucy to live in comfort all our days, Levitt would be a good investment without e'er a penny in his pocket, because he's so genteel, and, above all, mighty pleasant. Whereas, Joe's quite a Puritan—speaks pretty, and laughs in moderation at other people's jests, but ne'er cuts a joke himself, I assure you.”

To do Levitt justice, he did not malign his rival behind his back ; but he had not the smallest scruple in putting him in a ridiculous light. Then he would make his mind quite easy by adding, “Oh, but an excellent fellow is Joe ! 'Tis too bad, sir, to laugh at him.”

And all this while, he was borrowing money of his cousin ! This, which would

have given many another man a hold upon Levitt, gave *him* a hold on Mr. Oldworth, because he knew his delicacy and high-mindedness to be such, that he would never take advantage of his lying under obligation to him. This knowledge, which would have forbidden a generous nature to make the smallest jest at his expense, Levitt availed himself of with unscrupulous gaiety.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RIVALS.

"Her father loved me—oft invited me."

OTHELLO.

"SOME flowers, sir?" faltered a girl, offering a nosegay to Mr. Oldworth, who repulsed her by a silent, impatient gesture very much at variance with his usual courtesy; for he was very unhappy at that moment, and, for a wonder, his naturally even temper was like sweet bells jangled and out of tune. His conscience smote him the next instant; he called the flower-girl back. She looked very poor, but neat and respectable.

"What is the price?" said he, feeling in his pocket.

"Sixpence, sir. Stay, take this one—that flower will soon fade."

"So will you," said he abstractedly.
"Why do you sell flowers?"

"My mother fell into difficulties, and then died," said the girl sadly. "I knew I must do something to support myself, but before I found anything to do, I became in want, and the woman I lodge with gave me a few pence and said I had better sell flowers."

"She gave you very poor advice, I think," said Mr. Oldworth. "Cannot you sew? or serve in a shop, or in a private family?"

"Oh that I could," said she expressively, "but I have not a chance."

"My poor girl," said he, after a few more questions, "I have not time at present to inquire into your circumstances, nor effectually to improve them—but I

know some one who will put you in the way of doing so yourself; if you really possess integrity. Take this money; it will buy up your whole stock; and then carry your flowers as a present from me to a lady whose address I will give you. Will you go to her?"

"Oh yes, sir, gladly! thank you kindly!"

He wrote a few words in French on a card, and gave her the lady's address. The lady was Mrs. Hannah More.

Relieved by having thus put poor Mary Grey in the way of hearing of something to her advantage, Mr. Oldworth went on his way; and the dull pain at his heart soon returned. Entering his counting-house, he gave a direction or two to his clerks, and shut himself up in his inner room, where he rested his head on his hands.

His fate was decided. That morning he had gone down to Chiswick, having ascertained the previous night that he was not a penny the worse for the late crisis; and his intention was to avail himself of the first opportunity to declare his attachment to Miss Tolhurst. He would have preferred going by water, but wind and tide were against him—(a bad omen to start with), and he was fain to avail himself of a stage-coach. Rumbling over the stones, his ideas seemed shaken into shape, and to embody themselves in such language as would best assist his cause. The coach-door opened, and who should step in but Levitt!

“Oh, what, Joe? humph! ha, ha! going to Chiswick, eh? ha, ha, ha! this is what I call a coincidence.”

“You are going there at any rate, it seems,” was Mr. Oldworth’s evasive answer.

“Well, yes, I am—and on pretty interesting business, too. You know how I stand there, so ’tis no use telling you—no need, no need—you must have seen it long ago—pierced through and through, old boy, with the darts of Cupid—ha, ha!” He was in such a strange, excited humour, and so absorbed in himself, that the constraint of his cousin’s rejoinders escaped his notice.

“Don’t tell me, Joe, whether you’re going down there—I’d rather not know—‘There is a tide in the affairs of men, which ’—the quotation is somewhat musty. By the by, your opinion of this bauble.” Drawing from his pocket a beautiful little diamond ring, which would just pass over the first joint of his little finger, he played said finger this way and that, to make the brilliants flash—(they were bought with

Mr. Oldworth's money) — and with an expressive smile replaced the ring in his breast pocket, just as an old lady and an enormously fat man added themselves to the party. Thenceforth, Levitt confined himself to knowing smiles and pithy monosyllables, sitting opposite Mr. Oldworth and continually looking at him; till at length, when a little way out of London, he could bear it no longer, but stopped the coach and got out.

“Hey? what? I'd a notion you were going on to Chiswick?”

“I did not tell you so, did I?” said his cousin, forcing a smile.

“No, no, by no means, and it's best as it is. Shall I carry your compliments?”

“No need; I shall shortly see my friends.”

“*Our* friends, hey?” The coach rumbled on, and Mr. Oldworth followed in the

cloud of dust it left behind it. His purpose was interfered with, that was certain ; should he abandon it altogether ? Certainly not ; the prize was open to both. Hal might, by activity and assurance, get the first chance, but did it thence follow he would be the winner ? Mr. Oldworth became aware, by the bitterness he felt at the mere possibility of his kinsman's success, how deeply his heart was concerned in the issue, and resolving to make his call late enough for Levitt's visit to be over, his emotion yet hurried him faster than he intended.

When what his impatience decided to be the proper time arrived, he presented himself at the house, and was shown into the back-parlour, where Mr. Tolhurst, in dressing-gown and night-cap, was smoking. He received him with cheerfulness, and

said he was the man of all others he was glad to see. This hearty reception was so much more encouraging than Mr. Oldworth had lately received, that he was gratified by it accordingly; and when Mr. Tolhurst proceeded to ask how the money market was going on, he soon found himself telling his old friend how propitious a course his affairs had taken, and how he was relieved from his late anxieties.

“That’s well, that’s well,” said Mr. Tolhurst approvingly. “We can’t get on in this world, Joe, without prudence and business knowledge, both of which you inherit from your father. He died worth a plum; and you may add half as much again to it, if you mind what you’re about.”

“Oh no, my dear sir, I have no idea of adding riches to riches, in the way of speculation. I only look on them as the

means of honest independence and of doing good to others."

"Fiddlesticks!" said Mr. Tolhurst. "You'll have a wife in your eye before long. Would you die a bachelor, forsooth?"

"Unless I live to get married," returned he, catching at the opening.

"To be sure, to be sure you may, if you don't fall into too old-bachelor habits," said Mr. Tolhurst. "Women don't like them, I can tell ye. Lucy don't: none of 'em do. A fine, off-hand manner, *that's* what takes with 'em, my boy; and if you cultivate it, ('tis none too soon to begin,) who knows but in some ten or a dozen years, some city heiress——"

"Ten or a dozen years!" repeated Mr. Oldworth in dismay. "My dear sir, there's no reason I should wait like that; and as for a city heiress——"

“ Oh, what, you don’t like the city, do you? though you’ve lived in it all your life. Your father married his wife from the city, though, Joe, and so did I mine.”

“ My father’s was a match of pure affection, and so, I assure you, will mine be, if—”

“ See there, see there ! ” cried Mr. Tolhurst, whose attention was wandering, and who signed with his pipetowards the garden, where he saw something at which he gazed with intense interest. “ Hist, Joe ! look, look ! the prettiest sight that ever you saw ! Little they guess we overlook them, pretty creatures ! How we *should* catch it, Joe, if theyknew they were overlooked ! ” Mr. Oldworth hastily looked as he was bidden, and saw what seemed, for the moment, to turn his heart to stone. What says the ballad?—

“ The mutual flame was quickly caught,
Was quickly, too, revealed.”

Too quickly, too quickly, he thought, as he judged from the triumphant mien of Levitt and the downcast smiles of Lucy that they were engaged lovers. Unconscious, at the instant, of impropriety, he gazed as fixedly as Mr. Tolhurst, chuckling with elation, was doing ; and then turned aside with a catch in his breath that was almost a cry.

“Didst speak, Joe?” said Mr. Tolhurst, looking round with a broad smile.

“No, sir—no—”

“That’s a settled thing, my lad, if ever there was one.”

“I suppose so, sir—”

“Suppose? but it *is* so! I’ll wager you a pound of it.”

“Do you not know, then?” said Mr. Oldworth, with sudden hope.

“Know? no more than you do; of

what's passing between 'em at this moment, that is. I've not seen your cousin to-day, except from this window. I heard the gate-bell ring, a good bit ago ; looked up, saw him walk down the garden, switching his clouded cane with that janty air of his—knew he'd come on Lucy directly he turned the corner of the hornbeam hedge, where there's a pretty arbour, you know, all daisies and periwinkles and shells and coloured glass—quite a lovers' seat ready made—wondered what they'd say to each other, gave a pretty smart guess ; but never saw 'em till this moment. And now, Joe, such is my knowledge of mankind, that I'd take my affidavit the thing is settled."

"Does it please you, sir ?" said Mr. Oldworth, with difficulty.

"Beyond expression," said Mr. Tolhurst, clapping him heartily on the shoulder.

"Look ye, my young friend, if you don't know what are parental feelings—my child is as the apple of my eye, I assure you. I know I must some of these days die, though I hope the time is a long way off. Then, what becomes of Lucy, if meantime she don't get married? At the end of thirty or forty years, she'd be a forlorn old maid! a *rich* old maid, surrounded by harpies! inveigled perhaps into marriage by some fortune-hunter, or living all forlorn, and leaving her money—*my* money—to a kitten! Joe, it wasn't for that I enslaved myself to business!"

"No indeed, sir—"

"And you see," continued Mr. Tolhurst, with a tear in his eye, "to see my girl well married has been the wish of my heart. By well married, I mean happily married—married to the man of her

choice, Joe!—whether Levitt, or you, or the man in the moon. To say truth, her choice lies pretty much between the three. Neighbours are mighty civil; but young men don't come forward—young men don't come forward. I don't say but what I might have my own preferences; I might like Levitt better than you, or you better than Levitt, or the man in the moon better than either; but what I have decided on, throughout, has been that Lucy should make her own choice, Joe; and I don't think you can call me a bad father."

"No, indeed, sir," said Mr. Oldworth, wringing his hand.

"You understand me, you understand me, I see," said Mr. Tolhurst, returning the grasp with interest. "You feel for me; you've a feeling heart—you understand a father's feelings. If it had been you, (and at first, I confess, I thought she

liked you) I'd have welcomed you with all my heart; we've an old standing family connexion, and you're an excellent fellow. But, since 'tis Levitt, Joe, there can be but one opinion of him! Tell me not what his want of fortune is, tell me what is the man!"

Mr. Tolhurst evidently used this expression figuratively, and did not require to be told what the man was, for whom he had already so cordial a preference.

"They'll be here directly, you'll see," said he complacently, "down on their knees at my feet, come hand in hand for my blessing. Don't run away."

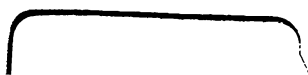
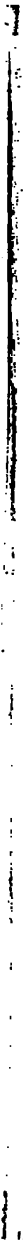
"Indeed, dear sir, I must—it would be the height of indelicacy to be present. My best hopes—my tenderest wishes——"

There was a choke in his voice—he hurried away in great disorder. Scarcely master of himself, he repaired to the

waterside, and engaged a boatman to take him down the river—still against wind and tide! for the tide had meanwhile turned and the wind shifted; but what matter? struggling against wind and waves was rather congenial to his mood than otherwise; the breeze fanned his aching brow; the tumult of his mind subsided into dejection. He knew no more than Mr. Tolhurst that Levitt was actually accepted, but appearances favoured it; and he acknowledged the virtue of her father's decision, that Lucy should make her own choice.

This was how it came about that when the poor girl accosted him with "Some flowers, sir?" he repulsed her impatiently—to be soon recalled with self-upbraiding.

END OF VOL. I.



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